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ERIC HOLDER'S HORRIBLE HEARING
MARY KATHARINE HAM

THE ADVENTURES OF
LOW IMPACT MAN
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COVER BY HAL MAYFORTH

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Media on Palin: 'War of the Worlds, II'

The media response to Sarah Palin's *Going Rogue* has been nothing short of bizarre. You read the stories and watch the broadcasts, and it's like *War of the Worlds*: The Martians have landed, and there's a full-on panic. The AP assigned 11 reporters to "fact check" Palin's book and discovered that—this is not a joke—Palin is ambitious. Don't worry if you can't recall the AP fact check of Barack Obama's *The Audacity of Hope*. None exists.

For a cover story on Palin, the editors at *Newsweek* scoured thousands of images of the governor and decided that the one that best captured her record, personality, and appeal was a shot of her in running shorts. "We chose the most interesting image available to us to illustrate the theme of the cover," editor Jon Meacham said in a statement. We think Palin looks great, too, Jon, but none of the several attacks on her included in the cover package focused on her athletic gear.

Meanwhile, CNN's Wolf Blitzer revealed more about himself than any news anchor should, with this Twitter post: "CNN Jessica Yellin did a very good report in SitRoom on Sarah Palin and her sexuality—the fact that she's good looking. Did you see it?" The liberal blogger assigned to review *Going Rogue* for the *Washington Post* admitted that she hadn't read the book. In the *New York Times*, critic Michiko Kakutani wrote that Palin was being "ungrateful" to the McCain aides who slandered her anonymously and tried to blame her for McCain's defeat. If Palin hadn't told her side of the story, no doubt these same critics would be attacking her for "covering up" what really happened during the 2008 campaign.

Over at David Bradley's *Atlantic*, the biggest one-man political blogger in captivity, a man who has been uniquely obsessed for the past year over the details of Palin's pregnancy while carrying her youngest child, suspended publication of his website for 12 hours because "there is a possibility here of such a huge scandal that we would be crazy not to take our time either to debunk it or move it forward for further examination." Andrew Sullivan has since returned, but there's been no further mention of the "huge scandal." He must still be waiting for the post office to deliver Palin's medical records.

Reporting live from the real America on MSNBC, Norah O'Donnell belittled and condescended to a teenage Palin fan who didn't realize that Palin had supported John McCain's pro-TARP position. Later, in an appearance on *Hardball* with Chris Matthews, O'Donnell informed Matthews of her incredible discovery that—wait for it—Grand Rapids Republicans tend to be people of pallor. "This is a largely white—almost no minorities in this crowd" lining up to have Palin sign their books, O'Donnell reported.

"They look like a white crowd to me," Matthews agreed. Then he added, "Not that there's anything wrong with it." Good to know! Later, though, Matthews seemed to imply that there was something "wrong with it" when he said, "I think there is a tribal aspect to this thing, in other words, white vs. other people." We disagree. The real divide is between the folks whom Sarah Palin drives absolutely bonkers . . . and everybody else. ♦

First 'Pacific President'?

For those who believe that President Obama is unusually self-absorbed, or suffers from an acute case of narcissism—even by the standards of a successful politician—his claim last week in Tokyo to be "America's first Pacific president" must have left them breathless with wonderment. It certainly left THE SCRAPBOOK nearly speechless.

Sure, Barack Obama is the first president born in Hawaii (1961), and he lived in Indonesia with his mother and stepfather during 1967-71. But he is not the first president born along the Pacific Ocean (that would be Richard Nixon, 1913) and there's a very long list of American presidents with intimate experience of the Pacific side of the planet, including long residence—even longer than Barack Obama's!

George H.W. Bush during World War II, one of many 'Pacific Presidents.'

NEWSCOM

—and as adults as well.

Just take our 20th century chief executives as an example. Herbert Hoover lived for years in Australia and China as a mining engineer, spoke Mandarin Chinese, and, based on his intimate knowledge of the city, guided U.S. Marines around Tientsin during the Boxer Rebellion. William Howard Taft was the first civilian

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governor-general of the Philippines, resident in Manila, during 1900-04. John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and George H.W. Bush all served in the Pacific as naval officers during World War II. Dwight Eisenhower lived in the Philippines for four years in the 1930s while serving as chief aide to General Douglas MacArthur.

Then there are those presidents with what we might call second hand Pacific experience. Franklin Roosevelt's mother, for example, lived for years in Canton while her father made his fortune in the China trade. William McKinley sent the U.S. fleet into Pacific waters to defeat the Spanish in 1898, acquiring Guam and the Philippines (and Puerto Rico) in the process. McKinley also annexed Obama's birthplace in 1898. Andrew Johnson purchased Alaska from the Russians in 1867, Millard Fillmore sent Commodore Perry to "open" Japan in 1854, John Tyler sent the first American ambassador to China in 1843—and the list goes on.

None of which is to suggest that Barack Obama's boyhood tenure in the Aloha State or the old Dutch East Indies doesn't count, or that he isn't free to anoint himself a "Pacific president" when seeking to impress his Asian hosts. But despite what you may read in the media, or hear whenever the president discusses the past, our nation's history did not begin on an August day in Honolulu in 1961, and Obama is not the first president to look eastward and see America. ♦

THE RACE CARD

'Judaism, Straight Up'

Contributing editor David Gelernter's new book, *Judaism: A Way of Being*, is available this week, from Yale University Press. The Scrapbook, not being expert on things Jewish, asked our colleague in the next cubicle over, William Kristol, to say a word about it.

He said, "A word about it."

We kid. Here's Kristol:

"David has written a spectacular book. It's at once short and deep; it's a fun and easy read with many stop-let-me-think-about-that moments; it's both scholarly and inspiring. David's exploration of the role of images, or what he calls 'image-themes,' in Judaism is fascinating, and his explanation of how Judaism's 'multilayered images' reveal and explain 'the unique beauty and truth of the Jewish worldview' is extraordinary.

"Gelernter writes that his is a book primarily for Jews, and I'd think that will prove to be the case. But his account of 'Judaism at full strength, straight up; no water, no soda, aged in oak for three thousand years' will I suspect prove fascinating to many serious people of other faiths, especially Judaism's little brother or cousin, Christianity. For David has written a book that, in its exploration of Judaism, tells us something—tells us a lot—about the human condition." ♦

Hot, Bothered, and Flat Wrong

When last we checked in on the celebrated *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman, he was singing the praises of that "reasonably enlightened group of people"—aka the Communist Chinese politburo—whose "one-party autocracy" in Beijing has "great advantages" over America's democracy.

The primary advantage, it emerged, is that dictators can get their way without opposition. In our democracy, unfortunately by Friedman's lights, Republicans are resisting "national health care" and "climate/energy" legislation. In the one-party system he admires, those GOP obstructionists would presumably be working on their tans in reeducation camps, while the tenets of Barack Hussein

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Obama thought guided the enlightened nomenklatura in Washington.

We were prepared to believe that this was an ideological hiccup from the usually liberal (if often lame) columnist. But his latest effort seems to be an audition by Friedman for the role of demonizing the enemies of the one-party state:

> If you follow the debate around the energy/climate bills working through Congress you will notice that the drill-baby-drill opponents of this legislation are now making two claims. One is that the globe has been cooling lately, not warming, and the other is that America simply can't afford any kind of cap-and-trade/carbon tax. But here is what they also surely believe, but are not saying: They believe the world is going to face a mass plague, like the Black Death, that will wipe out 2.5 billion people sometime between now and 2050.

Seriously? This is a malevolent hallucination. There *are* people who fantasize about a depopulated earth, but they're lunatic-left greens, not climate-change skeptics. Good thing we have a system that keeps the likes of Friedman from exercising the power enjoyed by the despots of Beijing. ♦

Palin Postscript

Our account of the media's reaction to Sarah Palin's book would not be complete if we were to neglect those who ostentatiously advertised their being above it all. It took blogger Damon Linker 412 words to conclude that all Palin "deserves is silence." *Time*'s Joe Klein blogged that he's engaged in a "continuing effort to not write a word—to not give any additional publicity—to a certain former vice presidential candidate who has 'written' a 'book' this week." Klein's colleague Amy Sullivan chimed in, "I'm joining Joe as a conscientious objector to Palinmania. (Did anyone else start twitching less than a minute into the Barbara Walters interview?)"

Even in pretending to ignore Palin, they betray their obsession. ♦

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The Turkey Vanishes

Whenever conversation turns to dog stories, especially tales of dogs' misdeeds, my husband bides his time, hanging back while others spin their various yarns.

I take my turn, reciting Nandi's depredations. The quintessential family golden retriever of my childhood, she used to leap the high fence around our yard and roam the neighborhood stealing shoes. I was marked for life by the humiliation of having to take a bag of chewed up shoes door to door to see if any could be reunited with their owners.

There was the time Nandi ate a dozen tickets to the Royal Ballet. They were expensive tickets, to be shared by two families as a special treat, and all that was left of them was a few soggy crumbs. Luckily, my friend Helen was supposed to come with us to see *Swan Lake*, and her mother—braver or more brazen than mine—took the crumbs to the box office and cried, and got us replacements.

Even in old age, Nandi was equal to downing a freshly constructed gingerbread house (think gingerbread Dresden). But after the gingerbread house, I'm done. I'll finish saying my piece and there'll be a pause. Then Bill will say, "That reminds me of the time Taimyr stole the Thanksgiving turkey."

What??? people will say.

No!!! they'll say.

Not the Thanksgiving turkey?

I never knew Taimyr (pronounced Tay-mar), but all who did testify that she was the ultimate alpha dog, a huge and exuberant Samoyed, beautiful and intelligent, too, and named for the Siberian peninsula that is home to this oldest recognized breed. She was the Anderson family dog who kept Bill company after he was widowed, and before and after that she played the starring role in many a legendary scene.

Never, though, with more spirited guile than the year she took advantage of the hubbub surrounding the arrival of Thanksgiving guests to slip into the kitchen, seize the bird, and carry it up two flights of stairs to an attic-like room, where she peacefully devoured it under a bed. The skeleton, picked clean, went undiscovered for weeks. And the assembled merrymakers had to order out Chinese.

DARREN GYGI

It's a great story—until you think about it, and if you do it falls apart at the seams.

I thought about it the other day. For one thing, even a canine genius couldn't carry a roasted turkey two feet, much less up two flights of stairs, without leaving a trail of juice and drippings. Besides, wasn't it hot? The whole thing was flat implausible. I confronted Bill.

No, no—it seems the mental picture I had derived from hearing the story told and retold was all wrong. Taimyr did the deed *before the turkey was cooked*. I thought about it.

"So you had hours before dinnertime to adjust to the vanishing of the turkey? Are you telling me that in that time no one found the dog or the bird?"

Suddenly Bill's memory went hazy. I decided to consult another witness. I called his daughter Jennifer.

"I can't remember the actual finding of the turkey," Jen said, "but we must have found it that evening since Taimyr hid it under my bed.

"Also, that bit about ordering Chinese doesn't sound right. Mom always made a big Thanksgiving. I'm sure there was plenty to eat."

We both pondered.

"You know," she resumed, "it all happened when I was in sixth grade, a long time ago. I remember it mainly from Dad's retelling."

The vagaries of the oral tradition yawned before us. I held my breath. But Jen went on.

"When you get right down to it," she said, "it could just as well have been a Christmas roast."

Bill, however, isn't budging. He concedes he's fuzzy on what was eaten for dinner that Thanksgiving, but he stands by the heart of the matter. Taimyr was so clever at concealing her stolen treasure that days at least elapsed before the carcass was found.

As to the Christmas roast, he says that was another occasion entirely. That time the thief was caught almost at once, red handed, under the dining room table.

So the moral of the tale would appear to be: If you can't guard the meat, get the samoyed out of the kitchen. And maybe also, when it comes to family stories, have the sense to let sleeping dogs lie.

Claudia Anderson

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the weekly Standard

No Substitute for Victory

Can the United States win the war in Afghanistan? The antiwar left has long held the war is unwinnable. Now some conservatives are arguing that President Obama's weakness and indecision forecast American failure—and that, if we're going to fail, we should just get out now.

We would be the last to defend Obama's indefensible dithering. But the war in Afghanistan remains both winnable and worth winning—even with Obama as president. And no form of withdrawal or defeat is consistent with safeguarding key American interests in a volatile and dangerous region of the world.

President Obama's apparent reluctance to pursue the fight does not inspire confidence. But he did send General Stanley McChrystal to take command, along with 21,000 additional troops. Despite efforts by political operatives around the president to push him toward withdrawal now, the president may yet do the right thing—soon, please!—and provide General McChrystal with the forces he needs to pursue decisive operations in 2010. And the president might put real effort into explaining his decision and the war's importance to the American people. In any case, to the extent the administration doesn't seem sufficiently stalwart or willing to provide those in the field the resources they need, a loyal opposition should press the administration to do the right thing, rather than relieving it of its responsibilities by preemptively deciding it won't.

A turn by the GOP to rhetorical opposition to the war would absolve the Obama administration of its Afghan duty.

Some Republicans are understandably dismayed at the prospect of supporting a war they worry this president is incapable of prosecuting with sufficient vigor or conviction. They argue that keeping faith with the troops requires rejecting any halfhearted approach. They are right that Americans who wish to support our troops in the field should not accept policies that deprive them of the means to win. But a turn by Republicans to rhetorical opposition to the war would only absolve the Obama administration of its Afghan duty. The better course is to push the administration to take responsibility for the outcome in Afghanistan by continuing to support a fully resourced war effort, while criticizing and opposing any decisions that undermine the troops' chance of success.

After all, as Republicans pointed out on more than one occasion during the Iraq surge debate, it's not really possible to support the troops while opposing the war they are fighting. The troops will not be cheered by a collapse of political support for their effort at home, as they will not be helped by declarations that they are on a fool's errand. Furthermore, a withdrawal of Republican support for the war would allow the administration to claim that a collapse of bipartisan support at home compelled the president's acceding to defeat. But if it turns out that the president is ultimately unwilling to commit to succeeding in Afghanistan, he must be held accountable for that decision

And we need not accede to defeat. The challenges, both military and political, on the ground are great, but they are not greater than those we faced and overcame in Iraq. The U.S. military has become the best counterinsurgency force in history and has only just started to bring its capabilities to bear in Afghanistan. General McChrystal is an outstanding and battle-tested commander with a creative staff and extremely talented subordinates. And he is working for the architect of the Iraq surge, General David Petraeus.

The political team, on the other hand, is weak. Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke and Ambassador Karl Eikenberry have been ineffective and even counterproductive. The Obama administration appears to have recognized this, recently relegating Holbrooke to a diminished role and assigning Secretary of State Hillary Clinton the responsibility of formulating policy and working directly with Afghan president Hamid Karzai. It is a sign of seriousness.

The president's indecision and delay have increased the challenges we face in Afghanistan. But it remains unnecessary and unwise to accept defeat. A model for Republicans is the behavior of Senator John McCain from 2003 to 2007. McCain consistently questioned, challenged, and criticized President Bush's strategy and tactics in Iraq, but he never wavered in his determination to do everything possible to succeed there. Both his steadfast opposition and his steadfast support for the mission were essential in making possible the transformation of strategy that led to success in Iraq. Success in Afghanistan also depends on sound strategy and sufficient resources, which in turn are more likely if Republicans remain unyielding both in opposition to misguided attempts to fight the war on the cheap and in support of a strategy that will lead to victory.

—William Kristol & Frederick W. Kagan

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Obamanomics 101

No cheers for capitalism.

BY FRED BARNES

GARY LOCKE

Back in February, President Obama met with a group of CEOs in the White House, seeking their support for his economic stimulus package. One of his chief targets was Jim Owens, the head of Caterpillar in Peoria, Illinois. The day after the session in Washington, the president flew to Peoria to speak at the Caterpillar factory and took Owens and newly elected Republican representative Aaron Schock, the youngest member of Congress at 28, with him.

Aboard Air Force One, Obama chatted amiably with Owens and Schock. Owens showed Obama two pages of a PowerPoint presentation. The first gave the details of China's stimulus, devoted mostly to infrastructure. The second was Obama's stimulus (drafted by congressional Democrats), with far less money going to building and repairing roads, bridges, and other projects. That was the problem, Owens told Obama: too little for infrastructure and thus too little to engage companies like Caterpillar, which had just furloughed 20,000 workers.

When Obama delivered his speech in Peoria, he either hadn't understood what Owens told him or simply refused to accept it. The stimulus package, he said, would be "a major step forward on our path to economic recovery. And I'm not the only one who thinks so." Owens, the president said, had told him that "if Congress passes our plan, this company will be able to rehire some of the folks who were just laid off."

This was not only untrue, but proved to be embarrassing for Obama. After the speech, Owens talked to reporters at the foot of the podium. No, he wouldn't be bringing back any workers. (Later, Caterpillar announced that 2,500 of the layoffs would be permanent.) Owens and Schock flew back to Washington on Air Force One. This time, Obama ignored them. There was a chill. Press Secretary Robert Gibbs and adviser David Axelrod walked past Owens and Schock repeatedly to speak to the press pool in the rear of the plane. They didn't stop to chat either.

I bring up Obama's Peoria adventure because it bears on the Jobs Summit for which he has summoned business leaders to the White House on December 3. In February, the president and Owens were not on the same wavelength. That's likely to be the case with Obama and the business community at the summit as well—unless Obama has changed his economic tune significantly. There's no reason to believe he has. Nor have congressional Democrats.

Obama has his own theory of our current economic situation. His "first job," he told Chuck Todd of NBC News, was to stave off another "Great Depression," save government jobs (police, firefighters, teachers), and "make sure certain sectors of the economy were supported," such as "construction and infrastructure." "We've gotten that job done," he said.

"Our next job is to make sure we can accelerate the job growth," he said. "… So what we're seeing now is

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businesses are starting to invest again, they are starting to be profitable again, but they haven't started hiring again."

What's the matter with these business guys? The suggestion here is they ought to be hiring. But they're "sitting on the sidelines," the president told Major Garrett of Fox News. He regards them as not-very-conscientious objectors, avoiding the struggle to revive the economy and put people back to work. They're not doing their part, their duty.

Stronger words from Obama may follow. During the Depression, President Roosevelt demonized business and the wealthy ("economic royalists") and raised their taxes. When they declined to invest and stir economic growth, he accused them of staging a "capital strike." The Obama equivalent, if it comes to that, would be a "hiring strike."

We haven't gotten there yet. But Obama has made clear in his 10-month presidency that he has minimal respect for business or the profit motive. Ambitious, talented young people should work for nonprofits. Last summer, he criticized doctors who gouged by insisting on expensive tonsillectomies to cure simple sore throats. They reflected a "business mentality," he said.

And what the president doesn't understand—or, to be more charitable, refuses to acknowledge—about free markets, the economy, and competition could fill a book, or at least an Obama speech. The economic growth he sees was produced, in part, by cash-for-clunkers and the first-time homebuyers tax credit. It foreshadowed an unusually weak recovery. And the profits came largely from cost-cutting, not a flood of new revenue.

Obama told Garrett that spending cuts or tax increases would jeopardize the recovery. But what do businesses, small and large, see staring them in the face? Tax increases—President Obama's tax increases. He backs an increase in tax rates on income, dividends, and capital gains that will go into effect in 2011. Obamacare, should it pass, is loaded with tax hikes. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants a Value Added Tax.

The president is looking at "tax provisions" to spur hiring, but he's done that before. Last winter, he spoke fondly of a two-year tax credit to boost small business hiring, but congressional Democrats declined to put it in the stimulus. Instead, they produced a measure that bailed out profligate state and local governments and rewarded liberal interest groups.

That stimulus has failed to stimulate, and the administration's claims of jobs it has supposedly created or saved have been discredited and become a national scandal. Obama's excuse: Calculating a jobs number is an "inexact science."

Small, targeted tax cuts like the one aimed at small business won't do much for hiring. "This is an anti-risk-taking climate," says Republican representative Paul Ryan. "You have to give them [businesses and investors] incentives to lower the price of risk." Ryan recommends cutting the business income tax to 25 percent from 35 percent, eliminating the tax on capital gains for two years, and providing a 100 percent tax writeoff for equipment, plant construction, and other expenses the first year. Hiring would follow.

Presidents from Calvin Coolidge to John Kennedy to Ronald Reagan to George Bush understood that strong incentives are necessary to trigger rapid growth and hiring. Strong incentives, plus more investment in infrastructure, would no doubt have won the endorsement of Jim Owens of Caterpillar. He didn't get them from Obama, and my guess is he never will. ♦

Eric Holder's Horrible Hearing

The Obama plan to try KSM in New York bombs on Capitol Hill. BY MARY KATHARINE HAM

Geraldine Davie has already seen one 9/11 co-conspirator tried in the United States, and that was enough for her. "I went to the Moussaoui trial every day," says Davie, of the years-long prosecution of the "20th hijacker" Zacarias Moussaoui in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia. "That was a travesty."

Davie, a petite brunette, is quick to proclaim her Italian, New York heritage, but her accent says it for her. Her daughter Amy O'Doherty—*Irish*-Italian, she specifies, as she pulls out a photo of a grinning, lightly freckled young woman—had graduated from college and gone to work at Cantor Fitzgerald in the World Trade Center 16 months before 9/11.

"I had just moved her into Manhattan, into Soho . . . weeks before," Davie says. "She had one foot in young adulthood and one in maturity." Davie shifts from tenderness when talking about her daughter, to toughness, when it comes to her murderers.

"This fellow [Moussaoui], you know what he would do? He would wait until the judge left the courtroom, and the jury left, and then he would spew this terrible anger," she says. "Hateful, hateful stuff. . . . We're gonna have that in New York? For years?" The trial, which ended with Moussaoui's guilty plea, was notorious for its theatrics. Moussaoui represented himself and was noted for such legal arguments as, "God Bless Mohammed Atta" and "America, you lost. . . . I won."

Sitting three rows behind Attorney General Eric Holder Wednesday in a cavernous Capitol Hill hearing room, Davie had come to let him

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know she doesn't want to face such a spectacle again.

She joined 12 other 9/11 family members at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the Obama administration's decision to try Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM) and four other 9/11 planners not as enemy combatants and war criminals before a military commission, but as civilians in federal court in New York City. They brought with them more than 100,000 signatures gathered by three 9/11 and national security websites—TheBravest.com, 911FamilesforAmerica.org, and KeepAmericaSafe.com (on whose board this magazine's editor serves).

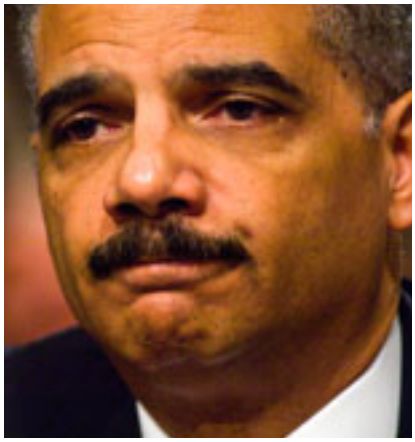
Holder spoke of the trials as a correction of Bush-era delays and an overdue attempt to seek justice for the victims of 9/11, but many present disagreed with his definition of justice. "To give these animals due process and to afford them constitutional rights is obscene," said John Owens, whose brother died in the towers on 9/11. (Peter Owens would have turned 50 next week.) "It angers me to no end that this guy is gonna get a platform, paid for by us, in the shadow of Ground Zero where my brother died."

Senator Patrick Leahy, the Vermont Democrat who chaired the hearing, touted the backing of Peaceful Tomorrows, a pacifist group of 9/11 families, in favor of the Holder plan, but the showing of support in the gallery was sparse. The antiwar protesters of Code Pink only mustered two uncharacteristically quiet women. The Jersey Girls, a politically active group of 9/11 widows, released a statement supporting the decision two days after the hearing.

At times, emotions bubbled over, causing Leahy to call the crowd to order once. Holder's assertion that "failure is not an option" in these prosecutions raised senatorial eyebrows and snickers from the crowd. "Well, that's an interesting point of view," said Herb Kohl (D-Wisc.). Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) added, "I don't know how you can say failure is not an option. I'm a farmer, not a lawyer, but it seemed to me ludicrous."

Jon Kyl, the Arizona Republican, raised cheers from the gallery with his sharp questioning of Holder, who contended that his decision to bring 9/11 terrorists to civilian courts was based, not on politics, but on where he'd have the best shot at conviction.

"How could you be more likely to get a conviction in federal court when Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has already asked to plead guilty to a military commission and be executed," he asked. "How can you be more likely to get a conviction in a [civilian] court than that?"



Holder on trial

NEWSCOM

Peter Regan—who lost his dad, a New York firefighter, on 9/11—is disturbed by the plan on several fronts. After 9/11, the then 20-year-old joined the Marines, serving two tours in Iraq before coming back home to follow in his father's footsteps in the fire department.

The possibility that they may face trial in civilian courts means suspected terrorists captured on the battlefield may have to be informed of their right to counsel and to remain silent.

"I just couldn't imagine," Regan says. "We're soldiers and Marines and sailors. It's not our job. We're not cops. We learn Miranda rights once we come back if we want to pursue that career."

Holder could not answer when asked by Lindsey Graham if combatants apprehended on the battlefield had ever in U.S. history been prosecuted in federal courts.

"I'll answer it for you, and the answer is no," the South Carolina Republican said. "We're makin' history. And, we're makin' bad history."

As Holder left the hearing room, Alice Hoagland confronted him about his decision. Hoagland's son Mark Bingham died on Flight 93 in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. "I have great respect for you and your office, but I have to say that I take great exception to your decision to give short shrift to the military commissions," Hoagland said.

Hoagland was at the Guantánamo Bay detention facility where KSM is being held last December 8, when he and four other 9/11 conspirators expressed their desire to plead guilty and be executed. The pleas were not accepted because of questions about the defendants' competence to represent themselves and whether the death penalty could be applied without a jury verdict.

"I think I speak for many 9/11 families when I say we are heartsick and weary of the delays and the machinations, and I'm afraid that the theatrics are going to take over at this point," Hoagland told Holder.

The attorney general repeated to her his argument that his decision is based on evidence he can't disclose, which makes federal-court prosecution preferable to military commissions.

"This is almost a 'trust me' thing, I suppose," he said. "There are reasons why bringing this case in an Article III [federal] court, when it comes to the admissibility of certain evidence, is really the right way to go, and really maximizes our chances of getting a successful outcome."

Davie was not reassured, as she imagined herself and other 9/11 family members sitting in a courtroom in lower Manhattan, watching KSM rant for the gathered media.

"We struggle every day to get up out of that bed and make a life, and I'm preparing for a wonderful Thanksgiving, and now I'm being thrown back into this horrible place," she said. "I should be having grandchildren; I should be going to weddings and parties and family gatherings, and look— my life demands now that I do this. Terrible." ♦

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Malign Neglect

Political correctness and institutional stupidity in the case of Nidal Malik Hasan. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Attorney General Eric Holder spoke with confidence and authority before the Senate Judiciary Committee last Wednesday when asked how he would prevent another attack like the one committed by Nidal Malik Hasan at Fort Hood.

> I think what we have to do is understand exactly what happened that led to that tragedy. Were there flags that were missed? Were there miscommunications or was there a lack of communication?

Holder promised a "sound investigation" of the shooting.

It was a nice try, but Holder's tone did little to disguise the speciousness of his words. We already know the answer to the three questions Holder posed. There were flags that were missed. There was miscommunication. And there was a lack of communication.

The relevant question is not whether there were errors, but why—after eight years of restructuring our national security and intelligence infrastructure to prevent such failures—there were grave errors that cost 13 people their lives.

The answer to that question is becoming all too clear: a deadly combination of political correctness and institutional stupidity. And in the days since the Fort Hood attack, those characteristics have remained on prominent display—both at the top of the Justice Department and in its ranks.

During an exchange at the Judiciary Committee hearing, Senator Herb Kohl, a Democrat from Wisconsin, reminded Holder that the FBI had known about Hasan before the attacks. "Major Hasan came to the attention of the FBI last December because of emails that he had written to a known terrorism suspect. But the FBI did not pursue an investigation of him because they concluded that the emails were consistent with his research at Walter Reed."

Holder allowed that the "interaction between Hasan and other people" was "disturbing." That may not seem like a big admission, but it was a major reversal of the official line over the previous two weeks.

Within days of the shooting, reports began to surface that Hasan had been in email communication with a jihadist imam and al Qaeda recruiter named Anwar al Awlaki. Awlaki had ties to three 9/11 hijackers, had been investigated by the FBI twice, had been detained in Yemen at the request of the U.S. government, and was an ongoing concern—as the monitoring of his email makes clear. His sermons had served as inspiration for plotters of several attacks over the past few years. He was a dangerous man. And we knew it.

Yet FBI officials said immediately after the shooting that the bureau was not considering the possibility of Hasan being linked to terrorists. Then, rather than disown their previous comments when the information about Awlaki came to light, the FBI sought to downplay the significance of the communications. In a statement, the FBI said that analysts from a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF)

> assessed that the content of those communications was consistent with research being conducted by Major Hasan in his position as a psychiatrist at the Walter Reed Medical Center. Because the content of the communications was explainable by his research and nothing else derogatory was found, the JTTF concluded that Major Hasan was not involved in terrorist activities or terrorist planning.

FBI officials assured reporters on background that the communications were "benign."

It was a foolish claim. Even if the content of the emails was "benign," the fact that there were such emails could not be. What was a senior U.S. Army officer doing contacting an imam who had been close to 9/11 hijackers? And now we know more about the content of the emails. They were not "benign" at all.

Early last week, the *Washington Post* published an interview with Awlaki. Hasan apparently first contacted Awlaki on December 17, 2008, and was interested in his views on sharia law and jihad, among other things. Awlaki—who praised Hasan as a "hero" after the shooting—denies that he ordered the attack. But according to the *Post*, six days after Hasan first reached out to him Awlaki "posted online words encouraging attacks on U.S. soldiers, writing: 'The bullets of the fighters of Afghanistan and Iraq are a reflection of the feelings of the Muslims towards America.'"

The *Post* article further reported:

> In the emails, Hasan appeared to question U.S. involvement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and often used "evidence from sharia that what America was doing should be confronted."

There are, of course, many reasons not to trust the words of an al Qaeda cleric. But late last week, ABC News offered more details of the 18 emails between Hasan and Awlaki. In one, Hasan tells Awlaki, "I can't wait to join you" in the afterlife. Citing officials familiar with the emails, ABC reported that Hasan also asked Awlaki "when is jihad appropriate, and whether it is permissible if there are innocents killed in a suicide attack."

Got that? A serving U.S. Army officer and devout Muslim emails an al Qaeda recruiter to ask about jihad and collateral damage from attacks, and the FBI, with knowledge of the content of those emails, assures the press they are "benign."

Unbelievable. ♦

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Obama Blunders Through Asia

Undoing Bush's years of deft diplomacy.

BY ROSS TERRILL

Much dire rhetoric has been unleashed in liberal quarters about the damage done by George W. Bush's foreign policy. The alleged damage, however, is not evident in Asia. When Ken Lieberthal, a respected China specialist and Democratic loyalist, spoke at Harvard early this year, I asked him to name a single year in memory when Washington had as good relations with India, Japan, and China as under Bush. He changed the subject.

The White House stated as Obama left Asia for home last week: "Overall, American leadership was absent from this region for the last several years." Nonsense. Bush left office with U.S. relations with Asia's big four—China, India, Japan, and Indonesia—taken together, better than ever in history.

Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh many times remarked that President Bush was popular in India, and so was the United States. U.S.-Japan relations were excellent under Bush, in partnership with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and two successors. Nor were U.S. relations with Australia ever as good as in the years when Bush presided in Washington and John Howard in Canberra. In Southeast Asia after 9/11 the U.S. position improved sharply with Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand. And Bush drew Vietnam and, after 2007, South Korea, under its new president Lee Myung Bak, closer to the United States.

As for China, in his second Inaugural Address and his oration at Kyoto en route to Beijing in 2005, Bush treated the Chinese with respect but also as laggards in world-historical terms. "Free nations are peaceful nations," he said in Japan. "Free nations do not threaten their neighbors, and free nations offer their citizens a hopeful vision for the future."

Speaking hours before he was to reach Beijing, Bush was more explicit, yet still positive: "We encourage China to continue down the road of reform and openness, because the freer China is at home, the greater the welcome it will receive abroad. ... As China reforms its economy, its leaders are finding that once the door to freedom is opened even a crack, it cannot be closed."

Obama at the Great Wall

NEWSCOM

The irony is large. "Cowboy" Bush pulled off the feat of speaking boldly to Beijing about American values while also achieving a productive relationship with China. He secured solid support from Japan over Iraq, Afghanistan, and other issues without bowing down before the emperor.

Visiting China twice a year during the Bush administration, I watched the business sections of big-city bookshops grow. Typically, they offered Chinese translations of U.S. business titles, memoirs of successful American businessmen, and Chinese works applying U.S. entrepreneurial ways to local conditions. Never did I see any work by Al Franken, Michael Moore, or Garrison Keillor on offer in Chinese. Grassroots China was palpably pro-America and pro-Bush.

One hopes that continues, but it won't occur through apologies, embarrassment over U.S. power, and chatter about moral equivalence. In Shanghai on November 16 in front of hundreds of Chinese students, Obama touched on freedom only to say it is a challenge facing both the United States and China!

Obama's one-man "change" seems to have little bearing on our actual Asian relationships. The other day, the president encouraged North Korea to "rejoin the international community." When did it join? His claim to be "America's first Pacific president" overlooked Kennedy's and Bush *père*'s service in the Pacific during World War II and Hoover's years as an engineer in Australia and China.

Viewed historically, the position of the United States in East Asia is favorable because of the sustained deployment of American power, the triumph of the American values of democracy and free markets, and the attractiveness of American popular culture. For most of the twentieth century, the United States had some difficulty in maintaining decent relations with Japan and China simultaneously. Since the 1970s, however, with the Vietnam war behind us, a stable balance between Japan and China has been secured by the superior strength of the United States and an equilibrium created by American leadership.

The U.S. military is still the linchpin of deterrence, keeping the peace in Korea, the Taiwan Strait, and elsewhere, as it has for half a century. But Obama is backing away from American leadership and proposing to reduce U.S. military strength in the hope that nasty regimes may do the same.

Some good news is that America's China policy has been fundamentally stable since the Nixon-Mao opening of 1971-72. This continuity has resulted from four enduring factors: Washington is markedly more powerful than Beijing, and Chinese political and military leaders know it. China, unlike the

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United States, faces multiple potent neighbors; challenges other than from Washington can and do rear up. Third, for Chinese leaders, domestic development and stability is a higher priority than foreign policy goals. Finally, successive American presidents have seen no net benefit in again tangling militarily with China, as the United States did in Korea and Vietnam.

The age of globalization locks in this stability. We are no more dependent on China for buying U.S. Treasury bills than the Chinese are dependent on us for buying their apparel and electronics. This mutuality should prevent any collapse in China policy, whatever the Obama administration does; mutuality on such a scale seldom breaks down suddenly.

The bad news about Obama and China is that his China policy resembles a pack of cards that is reshuffled to suit the occasion.

In February, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that "issues such as Tibet, Taiwan and human rights … can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis, and the security crisis." This is one of the worst statements by any secretary of state in memory.

The Taiwan issue is about whether 23 million people will live in a democracy or under the Chinese Communist party. As Bush said, "Free nations are peaceful nations," and China threatens Taiwan. Taiwan's future is also about the balance of power in Asia. But Clinton averts her eyes and thinks, Don't let threats to Taiwan "interfere" with talking about global warming in Copenhagen! Obama declined to see the Dalai Lama before his trip to China, because that would displease Beijing. He will see the Tibetan after the trip to China: Who does that please?

Freedom is about whether the Chinese people will get news of the world unfiltered or only what the Communist party chooses for them to have. Freedom is about whether American products will get the access to Chinese markets that Chinese products have here. Freedom is about whether American scholars doing research in China are allowed the unfettered access that Chinese scholars working in the United States have. Freedom is not a card to pull out or whisk away as the occasion may require.

Obama on November 14 welcomed "the rise of a strong, prosperous China" as a "source of strength for the community of nations." Unlike Bush, he did not say a "free" or "democratic" China. Here is change we must denounce. There is a world of difference between China as an unfree superpower and China as a democratic superpower. Obama ducks the issue. Yet to see East Asia's U.S.-led security system replaced by an authoritarian Chinese leadership would undermine the interests of Washington and numerous capitals in the region.

While in China, Obama let Hu take the lead on how the visit was handled and on how the issues were framed. The mention of Taiwan in the joint Obama-Hu statement favors China by implying that sovereignty is the heart of the issue (meaning Taiwan ultimately belongs to China). No mention that any change in Taiwan's status should be with the Taiwan people's agreement or that stability in Asia would be upturned by Taiwan's disappearance as a separate nation.

The joint statement also talks condescendingly about India as part of a problem (with Pakistan) that Obama and Hu must together assess. But India is a partner no less important for Washington than China; would Obama condescend to China by jointly pontificating with India on China's relations with the appalling regimes of Burma and North Korea? It is simply not the case that China is Washington's global partner, with democratic India down at a lower rank.

A *Los Angeles Times* editorial asserted in January, "Obama assumes the presidency in a multipolar world." Not so. The United States was easily the world's only superpower on January 20, 2009. The danger is that Obama's "changes" will bring on a multipolar world: Talk with everybody about nothing and with nobody about anything. Slight the notion of clashes of interest among nations. Soft-pedal the idea of evil in the world. Such mushiness could soon shrink U.S. power.

In East Asia, moral example may or may not be effective in disarming rogues, but deterrence has worked. In this respect, 9/11 changed Asia less than it changed other parts of the world. Obama is not required to "reset" our relations with Asia. Rather, he should maintain the balance between Japan and China that has facilitated peace and economic development in East Asia since the 1970s. He should tell friend and foe alike that the United States considers democracy and free markets superior to authoritarianism and command economies, and give top priority to deepening America's relationships with its democratic friends, including Japan, India, South Korea, Australia, and other smaller powers. The U.S.-Japanese tie is central. Japan is with us; China is a question mark.

On particular matters, Obama must rouse the Democratic majority in Congress to end its disgraceful failure to seal a free trade agreement with South Korea. In Burma, U.S. diplomats should not be content to take one more cup of tea with Aung San Suu Kyi, but should say to the Burmese military dictatorship and the world that next year's elections will mean nothing unless Aung San Suu Kyi is fully free to campaign. On the Korean Peninsula—one place in Asia where the Bush administration achieved little—Obama ought to end the farce by changing the agenda of the Six-Party talks from terminating North Korea's nuclear program (near-impossible to agree on, impossible to verify) to moving toward the reunification of Korea (which would end the Pyongyang regime step by step and so solve the nuclear problem).

Of course, Obama might also, in a video message to Copenhagen, with an upraised arm and a slight frown, demand an end to global warming in Asia, and in his thank you notes to his nearly all male hosts on the Asia trip instruct them to roll back 5,000 years of oppression of Asian women by Asian men. The president shouldn't let Hu take the lead on everything. ♦

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German-Iranian Relations

A lovers' discourse.

BY BENJAMIN WEINTHAL

On November 3, six days before the 20th anniversary of the collapse of the Berlin Wall, freshly reelected German chancellor Angela Merkel delivered what many German commentators deemed to be the speech of her political career before a joint session of Congress. Merkel championed the unwavering contribution of American presidents Reagan, Bush senior, and Kennedy in bringing down the Berlin Wall.

The Merkel administration's own derelict Iran policy, however, has bolstered the wall between the West and the aspirations of hundreds of thousands of Iranians seeking a democratic nation as well as a break with the jingoistic foreign policy of their mullahs.Her robust rhetoric in Washington—"zero tolerance must also be shown if . . . weapons of mass destruction fall into the hands of Iran"—is belied by the ongoing sweet talk between Tehran and Berlin.

This long-standing lover's discourse, initiated by German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in 1984, is largely defined by the Islamic Republic's infatuation with German technology, and the Federal Republic's willingness to reciprocate—for example, by permitting Siemens-Nokia to supply surveillance technology to the Iranian regime in 2008. The monitoring equipment was used to stifle Internet, Twitter, mobile, and landline communications among Iranian protestors following the rigged election in June.

Notwithstanding Merkel and former Social Democratic party (SPD) foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's tough talk about turning the economic screws on the mullahs, the ex-Grand Coalition between the SPD and Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union failed between 2005 and 2009 to introduce unilateral sanctions. The significance of German technology in sustaining the Iranian regime was neatly summed up by Michael Tockuss, the former president of the German-Iranian Chamber of Commerce in Tehran: "Some two-thirds of Iranian industry relies on German engineering products."

Merkel's new governing coalition with the pro-business Free Democratic party (FDP) might very well bring us Act II of Germany's impotent Iran foreign policy. The FDP, the party of Germany's new foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, vehemently rejects curtailing German-Iranian trade, and during the 2002 federal election Westerwelle tolerated the late Jürgen Möllemann's (a top FDP politician) mass-mailing of election flyers bashing former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon. Möllemann's campaign strategy was widely viewed as the first public use of anti-Semitism to win over voters since the Hitler movement.

That toxic combination of pro-Iran trade policies and Westerwelle's hands-off approach to Möllemann's loathing of Israel helps to explain why the national security alarm bells promptly rang in Israel as Westerwelle became the new foreign minister.

Berlin's liaison with Tehran makes a mockery of Germany's so-called "special relationship" with Israel. The latter is now the jilted lover that Germany attempts to reassure, even as its actions dash Israel's expectations of fidelity. As Merkel declared to Congress that "Israel's security will never be open to negotiation," Israeli naval commandos were preparing a mission to seize the *Francop*, the German-owned vessel that carried a massive cache of Iranian-supplied rockets and weapons and was headed for Tehran's proxy militia Hezbollah in Lebanon and its allies in Syria.

To compound the gap between Merkel's rhetoric and the flourishing German-Iranian relationship (nearly 4 billion euros of trade in 2008), in early October, the *Hansa India*, sailing under a German flag and owned by the Hamburg-based Leonhardt and Blumberg company, was confiscated in the Red Sea by the U.S. Navy for unlawfully transporting ammunition to Syria and Hezbollah.

The *Francop* seizure—40 containers filled with 300 tons of weapons and rockets—represents, according to Israel's navy chief Brigadier General Rani Ben-Yehuda, an arsenal capable of sustaining a Hezbollah war against Israel for at least a month. That the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) chartered the *Hansa India*, and the *Francop* sailed from Iran with cargo listing IRISL, should not have surprised German authorities. The Bush administration designated IRISL in September 2008 as a criminal entity involved in unlawful arms trafficking, including equipment that is integral to Iran's illegal nuclear weapons program. For the same reason, the United Kingdom banned trade with IRISL in early October.

Despite declarations from Merkel that Israel's existence is integral to Germany's national security interests, then, the Iranians have used German vessels to transport weaponry to murder Israelis and destabilize the region in violation of U.N. sanctions imposed on Iran.

And add the striking irony of Merkel's administration agreeing to employ German naval carriers to enforce the 2006 U.N.-brokered cease-fire between Hezbollah and Israel during the Second War in Lebanon.

Benjamin Weinthal is the Jerusalem Post*'s correspondent in Berlin.*

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Germany deployed its navy as part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon to prevent the rearming of Hezbollah along the Lebanese coast. Three years of patrols have brought zero seizures by Germany's marine forces, even as private German shipping firms charter their vessels to Iran's merchants of death.

Merkel's speech ignored the reality on the ground between Iran and Germany. Iranian despot Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is rapidly exporting his brand of revolutionary Iranian anti-Semitism to the Middle East and to South and Central America. What better way could Merkel find to confront the mullahs than to announce that the Federal Republic of Germany is prepared to cease economic activity with Iran and recall its ambassador because of the regime's denial of the Holocaust; its refusal to suspend its nuclear enrichment program; and Tehran's threats to "wipe Israel off the map."

Moreover, Merkel's party controls the interior ministry and is thus uniquely positioned to ban Hezbollah and its 900 active members in Germany. Hezbollah remains a legal political organization in Germany and serves as a funding stream for its Iran-affiliated network in Lebanon.

A new "Berlin Wall" and "short-sighted self-interests" were Merkel's jabs at Congress for failing to push for radical environmental standards. Germany's fixation on scolding the Americans is child's play when compared with the effect of Germany's main security blind spot, namely, its 25-year-old dalliance with the Islamic Republic and the relationship's deleterious effects on the security of the international community.

Should the second Merkel administration wish to fulfill its lofty rhetoric about tearing down new Berlin Walls worldwide it might instead decide to aid Iranian democrats seeking a collapse of the wall separating them from freedom. How about a lover's discourse with the pro-democracy movement in Iran rather than with the mullahs' incorrigibly reactionary regime? ♦

Time for a Dose of Protectionism?

The case for giving China a taste of its own medicine. BY IRWIN M. STELZER

Odd, that. There is Hu Jintao, the world's leading protectionist, the man who manipulates his nation's currency so as to keep goods and services made in other countries out while Chinese-made goods capture more and more market share, lecturing the American president on the dangers of protectionism. And there is Barack Obama, eyes downcast, supinely playing punching bag to Hu, even though he presides over the country that is China's biggest customer.

If there were to have been a useful outcome of what proved to be a disastrous Asian trip for Obama (see Ross Terrill's article on page 11 of this issue), it would have been to persuade China to abandon the policies that have jobs and investment fleeing these shores for China, to impress upon Beijing that stealing intellectual property "will have consequences," as our president often threatens in other circumstances. The Chinese seem no more cowed at the prospect of being exposed to such consequences than the Iranians, the North Koreans, the Russians, or just about any other adversary who has taken the measure of this administration.

Hu's position is understandable. His regime has no democratic legitimacy, no claim to the loyalty of its subjects—except the ability to provide jobs for the 10 million workers headed to China's cities every year. Fewer jobs might make for unhappy voters here, but in China they mean more riots, of which there seem to have been some 10,000 during the early days of the world economic downturn. The regime's ability to create millions of jobs is no small thing. But much of it is coming at the expense of American workers, and of workers in Europe, in other Asian countries that do not peg their currencies to the dollar, and in Latin America. Perhaps even worse, China's policy of subsidizing exports created and continues to create the imbalances that have done a lot more to fuel the current financial crisis than all the greedy bankers put together.

Free trade, economists like to point out, is not a zero sum game as trading partners benefit from obtaining in trade for their own products the goods they cannot make as cheaply at home. Trade with China bears little resemblance to that idealized description. In 1625, we bought Manhattan for colored beads, cloth, and hatchets worth $24. Almost four centuries later we began selling it to China for cheap sneakers and T-shirts—goods priced so low not because China is an efficient producer, but because it is a currency manipulator. Not only have we stocked up on Chinese products, we have borrowed from China to pay the bills. China now holds well over $1 trillion in American IOUs, which seems to have weighed heavily on President Obama as he met with Chinese leaders to discuss a "restructuring" of the U.S.-Chinese relationship. Hu sent him home with the present structure still firmly in place.

Many free trade proponents urge calm. After all, we survived a period in which our imbalanced trade with Japan handed us their Toyotas and them Rockefeller Center. Their pile of dollar earnings proved unthreatening

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to American interests. But China is not Japan. The Japanese had no way of parlaying their economic power into geopolitical power. They could not threaten us in the manner in which a creditor can threaten a debtor because they depended on us for their national security. Not so China, which has shown that it is willing to use its economic hold on us to attempt to dictate our foreign policy. In an effort to curry favor with his creditors President Obama refused to grant an audience to the Dalai Lama when the Tibetan leader visited Washington. In China, Obama failed to insist on some token release of a dissident or two. He agreed to address a handpicked audience, rather than demand access to a wider public. Even his cheerleaders in the media are appalled at the extent of the presidential groveling.

So, as Lenin once asked, "What is to be done?" Had the White House not confiscated Larry Summers's dog-eared copy of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* lest someone learn about how markets work and the importance of keeping government from playing too intrusive a role in the economy, Obama might have found the answer.

> The case in which it may sometimes be a matter of deliberation how far it is proper to continue the free importation of certain foreign goods, is, when some foreign nation restrains by high duties or prohibitions the importation of some of our manufacturers into their country. Revenge in this case naturally dictates retaliation. … There may be good policy in retaliations of this kind, when there is a probability that they will procure the repeal of the high duties or prohibitions complained of.

The great Scot wrote before anyone had heard of the World Trade Organization. Because we sponsored China, it is a member of the anti-protectionist WTO, which sees no harm in the distorting effect on trade of China's undervalued currency, but would never countenance discriminatory tariffs aimed at stuff made in China.

That is hardly an insuperable barrier to policies that would remind China that antagonizing its leading customer is not a good idea, as Obama recognized when he erected barriers to imports of some tires and pipes produced in Chinese factories. It would be a relatively simple matter to troll down the list of goods that we import primarily from China, and levy tariffs on them that would slide downward as the renminbi is allowed to slide up in value. Yes, there would be collateral damage to other nations that make the same goods, but no policy is perfect.

Would a Chinese appeal to the WTO put an end to such retaliation? Perhaps, but only after a long drawn-out set of hearings and appeals. Ah, you say, you are overlooking what was uppermost in Obama's mind when he all but curled into a defensive fetal position during the joint press conference that brought his China visit to a merciful close—a press conference at which no questions from the press were allowed: China might start dumping dollars, selling off all those Treasury IOUs stored in the basement of the central bank. Possibly—if China is willing to wipe a few hundred billion off the value of the assets it will still hold. But the consequences for the United States, which would be higher interest rates and, initially, slower economic growth, must be weighed against the longer term and much larger consequences of maintaining the status quo.

> In a worst case, America will have somewhat slower economic growth but somewhat more jobs, somewhat more expensive T-shirts, and a great deal more freedom of action in the Asia-Pacific rim.

The longer we allow things to stay as they are, with China using its undervalued currency to keep its goods cheap enough to displace American products on Walmart's shelves, the larger will be the stack of our IOUs China's rulers control. The longer we allow China to permit our companies a foothold in their country only if we turn over our technology and intellectual property as part of the price of access, the more likely it is that we will see high-tech Chinese goods doing to our GEs and others what their low-tech stuff has done to our shoe and apparel manufacturers.

There would undoubtedly be a cost to saying enough is enough, but the benefit—even not including the intangible one of showing that it is a bad idea to tug on Superman's cape—would surely outweigh that cost.

Meanwhile, unemployment would be rising in China, and the regime challenged by an emerging army of the unemployed, about which Chinese Communist leaders undoubtedly learned while studying their Marx. That should bring them to the bargaining table.

If not, and in a worst case, America will have somewhat slower economic growth but somewhat more jobs, somewhat more expensive T-shirts, and a great deal more freedom of action in the Asia-Pacific rim. That is a good trade, a price worth paying. Again, consult Smith:

> The recovery of a great foreign market will generally more than compensate the transitory inconveniency of paying dearer during a short time for some sorts of goods.
>
> To judge whether such retaliations are likely to produce such an effect, does not, perhaps, belong so much to the science of a legislator, whose deliberations ought to be governed by general principles which are always the same, as to the skill of that insidious and crafty animal, vulgarly called a statesman or politician, whose councils are directed by the momentary fluctuations of affairs.

Surely, the supply of insidious and crafty animals in this administration is sufficient to give us a good chance of winning a game of chicken with the Chinese. Their insidious and crafty animals would be risking a loss of power and reeducation as manual laborers in some remote agricultural region, ours only an increase in the price of sneakers and slower economic growth, which voters might not even notice or, if they did, might well decide to be a price worth paying to assure we will never again see an American president so shriveled a figure on a visit to Asia. ♦

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Going Backwards in Beirut

Hezbollah still holds power despite losing the election. BY PETER BERKOWITZ

Beirut

"If you think you understand Lebanon," a friend counseled me as I prepared for my first trip to her native land, "somebody's just explained it badly." Six days in Lebanon confirmed her wisdom. They also confirmed that the United States can ill afford to neglect this tiny, beautiful, strife-ridden country, which is in the Arab world but not entirely of it, and which since the 1980s has served as a battleground in Iran's quest for hegemony in a region critical to vital American national security interests.

My host on the trip was New Opinion Group, a Lebanese NGO. Created in the wake of the March 2005 Cedar Revolution, it is dedicated to "achieving a nonsectarian, democratic, and sovereign Lebanon." The small group of American journalists, policy analysts, and scholars of which I was a part met with civil society activists, professors, journalists, TV personalities, and leading politicians representing Lebanon's major sects.

Our conversations gave a sense of the elusive depths of the tribal, ethnic, and religious divisions that crisscross the country. They also made clear that the question of Hezbollah trumps all others in Lebanese politics today. A Shia-based and Syrian-backed Iranian proxy, Hezbollah operates not merely as a political party and military force but as a state within a state in the Shia dominated south of Lebanon. It holds in its hands the power to again drag Lebanon into a ruinous war against Israel or another civil war.

Peter Berkowitz is the Tad and Dianne Taube senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

In addition, our meetings brought into focus the elements of Lebanese exceptionalism. The country is about 28 percent Sunni, 28 percent Shia, and 39 percent Christian, but all told it contains 18 constitutionally recognized sects. Under the constitution, the president must be Christian, the prime minister Sunni, and the speaker of Parliament Shia, while cabinet positions must be evenly allotted to Christians and non-Christians. Further, France's persisting influence—French is widely spoken—and the impact of the Christians, who form the single largest community, give a particular prominence to Western ways.

Geography and climate also give Lebanon its special feel and flair. Occupying a sliver of land bordered in the south by Israel, in the north and east by Syria, and to the west by the Mediterranean, Lebanon is shaped by the sea, mountains, and valleys. Its capital, Beirut, is a natural deep water port. Because of the commerce it nourishes, people are constantly coming and going, acquainting the Lebanese with the wide world beyond their shores. Its natural attractions and cosmopolitan spirit also make Lebanon a favorite regional vacation spot. In the summer, Saudi princes and the middle class from around the Gulf enjoy Lebanon's beaches and cool mountain air, and in the winter they take to its excellent ski slopes and unwind at fancy mountain resorts.

In discussing Lebanese exceptionalism, one mustn't slight Beirut's famous nightlife. In the evenings Sunni, Christian, and Shia put aside political differences to dine on fine food, and to drink and smoke until all hours. There is nothing in the Middle East quite like the exuberant cabaret-style nightclubs where patrons begin to trickle in around 10, dinner is served at 11, and near midnight the curtain goes up on a succession of performers who effortlessly interweave Middle Eastern, European, American, and Latin American music. Soon patrons pour out into the aisles or hop up on chairs, tables, and even bar counters to dance.

Despite the worldwide financial crisis, Lebanon's economy, which is built around banking, tourism, and other services, is growing at a 6.5 percent clip, but the good times coexist with the constant threat of political crisis. Government had been on pause here since the June 7 elections. But on November 9 the majority and minority coalitions finally struck a deal to form a national unity government with Saad Hariri as prime minister. The March 14 bloc—a moderate, pro-Western, pro-democracy coalition led by Hariri—upset expectations in June and obtained a small parliamentary majority. To understand why Hariri had been unable to form a government for almost half a year, it is necessary to appreciate the significance of two other dates—March 8 and May 7—which have become synonymous in Lebanon with pivotal political moments.

In February 2005 a massive car bomb killed Rafik Hariri, Saad's billionaire father, along with more than 20 others. The elder Hariri had made his fortune in Saudi Arabia in the construction business. After Lebanon's 15-year civil war ended in 1990, he returned to his native land to spearhead the rebuilding of Beirut. His success led to his 1992 election as prime minister. He served until 1998, and then again from 2000 to 2004. It was widely assumed that his assassination was engineered by Syria, which continues to serve as the conduit through which Iranian arms flow to Hezbollah. And it was commonly understood that the assassination was meant to dramatize the cost that Syria and Hezbollah would exact from those working toward a Lebanon free of foreign tutelage. Four weeks after Hariri's murder, on March 8, 2005, approximately 500,000

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people, mostly Shia, held a rally in Beirut to reaffirm their pro-Syria loyalties.

Six days later, on March 14, a Sunni, Christian, and Druze crowd of more than 1 million—a quarter of Lebanon's population—shook their nation by gathering in downtown Beirut to outdo the pro-Syria demonstrators and show their devotion to a sovereign Lebanon. The stunning upsurge of pro-liberty and pro-democracy sentiment in what became known as the Cedar Revolution combined with international indignation over the Hariri assassination compelled Syria, which had occupied the country for 29 years, to withdraw its forces by the end of April. The forces of freedom exulted.

Three years later, on May 7, 2008, however, the March 14 coalition suffered a huge blow. Hezbollah forces, carrying little more than light arms but backed by a formidable guerrilla machine in the south and the threat of far more devastating force, rolled into Beirut and took over the city in a matter of hours. Lebanon's liberals and democrats were devastated by the failure of the United States and Europe to come to Lebanon's aid even as its cosmopolitan capital was overrun by ragtag fighters equipped by, and loyal to, Iran's Islamic revolutionaries. Hezbollah lifted the siege at the end of the month with the signing of the Doha Agreement, which, most importantly, gave it, a minority party, a veto over government action in a new national unity government.

A little over a year after this trauma, with the implications of Hezbollah's takeover still very much up in the air, the June 2009 elections turned on the single issue of whether Lebanon would submit to Hezbollah and the political authority of Syria and Iran, or build a free and democratic state. Despite eking out a narrow parliamentary majority, the March 14 coalition could not form a government for five months because Hezbollah blocked it—formally, by means of the powers it obtained through the Doha Agreement, and informally, through threats and intimidation. The newly announced national unity government gives 2 of the 30 ministerial portfolios to Hezbollah politicians.

One hears from all sections of Lebanese society that Israel is the key to reining in Hezbollah. Many Sunnis say this; so do significant parts of the Christian community as well as some Druze, in addition to Shia who are not aligned with Hezbollah or Amal, a Shia party friendly to Syria. According to this common line of thinking, Hezbollah's claim to uphold "resistance" would be substantially weakened by an Israeli decision to negotiate with the Lebanese government to leave the Shebaa Farms, some eight square miles of strategically important land on the slopes overlooking southern Lebanon, which almost everybody in Lebanon contends Israel occupies illegally. And Hezbollah's status would be weakened decisively, from this point of view, were Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian territories and allow the approximately 400,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon—half of them still in refugee camps 60 years after the armistice Lebanon signed with Israel, and all of them facing restrictions on the kinds of jobs they can hold—to return to an independent Palestinian state. Once all illegal Israeli occupation ends, so the argument goes, Hezbollah's reasons for existing as a fighting force will vanish.

One way to loosen Hezbollah's grip is to enable the Lebanese government to better provide the social services and financial support that, thanks to Iranian financing, Hezbollah now delivers.

But our New Opinion hosts, and several of the liberal Shia to whom we spoke, adamantly rejected this analysis. For Hezbollah, they persuasively argued, resistance does not refer merely to armed struggle against Israel's occupation of this or that piece of land, or even the battle against Israel's very existence, but a fight to the death against the claims of liberty and democracy in Lebanon and throughout the region in the name of Islamic law as dictated by the Iranian mullahs.

In these difficult circumstances, the United States can take several steps to advance America's interests in Lebanon, which, as it happens, would also advance the interests of liberty and democracy. First, the Obama administration can stop encouraging the widespread view, rooted in decades of pan-Arab rhetoric, that the key to Middle East peace is solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Peace between Israel and the Palestinians should be assiduously pursued, but to suppose that the absence of a final agreement between them is what stands in the way of security and stability in the Middle East is to play into the hands of Arab governments that cynically use the conflict to shift their people's attention from their own countries' internal failings and destabilizing ambitions.

Second, the United States can expand programs to support civil society in Lebanon, particularly K-12 education, and also economic development, particularly in the south, since one way to loosen Hezbollah's grip is to enable the Lebanese government to better provide the social services and financial support that, thanks to Iranian financing, Hezbollah now delivers. Third, the administration can redouble efforts to degrade Iran's ability to deliver cash and transfer funds electronically to Hezbollah. Fourth, it can place at the heart of engagement with Syria an insistence on cutting off the enormous flow of ammunition, machine guns, bombs, rockets, and missiles that Iran pumps through Damascus to southern Lebanon.

When all is said and done, notwithstanding its daunting complexity and multifaceted exceptionalism, Lebanon—like the Arab Gulf monarchies and Israel too—faces one looming national security challenge that encompasses all others, and its name is the Islamic Republic of Iran. Regional stability depends most of all on crafting strategies to thwart Tehran's export of Islamic revolution. In the near term, that task depends most of all on thwarting Iran's drive to acquire nuclear weapons. ♦

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The Adventures of LOW IMPACT MAN

ONE WEEK THAT WILL TURN YOU FROM A CONSPICUOUSLY CONSUMPTIVE CARBON MONSTER INTO A PERSON FULLY ABLE TO LECTURE THE LESS VIRTUOUS ABOUT HOW THEY'RE DESTROYING THE PLANET.

By Matt Labash

Remember that old Mac Davis song, "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble"? I was ten at the time of its release in 1980. I didn't understand it. But I hadn't yet planted my flag on the summit of major accomplishment. Now I have, and it's like Mac is singing to me. Hell, after my week of virtuous and simple living, it's like Mac is singing *about* me. My carbon footprint was erased as though a breaker had scoured it from a sandy beach thanks to No Impact Week, as in the eight-day experiment I just partook of with *Huffingtonpost*ers and eco-seekers and the No Impact guru himself, Colin Beavan, aka No Impact Man.

As virtuous as I am, Beavan is even more so. For before we spent October 18-25 in virtual togetherness, living individually in our homes, but with all 4,700 of us knitted together as a collective, Beavan lived carbon-footprint-free for an *entire year*, right there on the ninth floor of his Greenwich Village co-op. Beavan and his wife and his adorable baby Isabella lived without a car or the subway, electricity, or a refrigerator. They gave up meat and taking elevators and disposable diapers and even toilet paper. They made their own cleaning products out of environmentally friendly ingredients. They stopped buying new things altogether and any food that was packaged or came wrapped in plastic. They ate only locally grown ingredients and shopped at the Union Square Greenmarket or with reusable muslin bags out of the bulk bins at Integral Yoga Natural Foods. They stomped their laundry in the tub and what little trash they made went not into a landfill, but into a worm-eaten compost bin in their kitchen.

And why did No Impact Man do this? So that he could humbly show us how to save mankind from CO_2 armageddon. And, well, so he could write about himself on his *No Impact* blog (yes, computers use electricity, but his laptop used solar energy when he wrote at home—though not when he wrote at the Writers Room, a nonprofit urban writer's colony in an airy East Village loft). And so that he

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY HAL MAYFORTH

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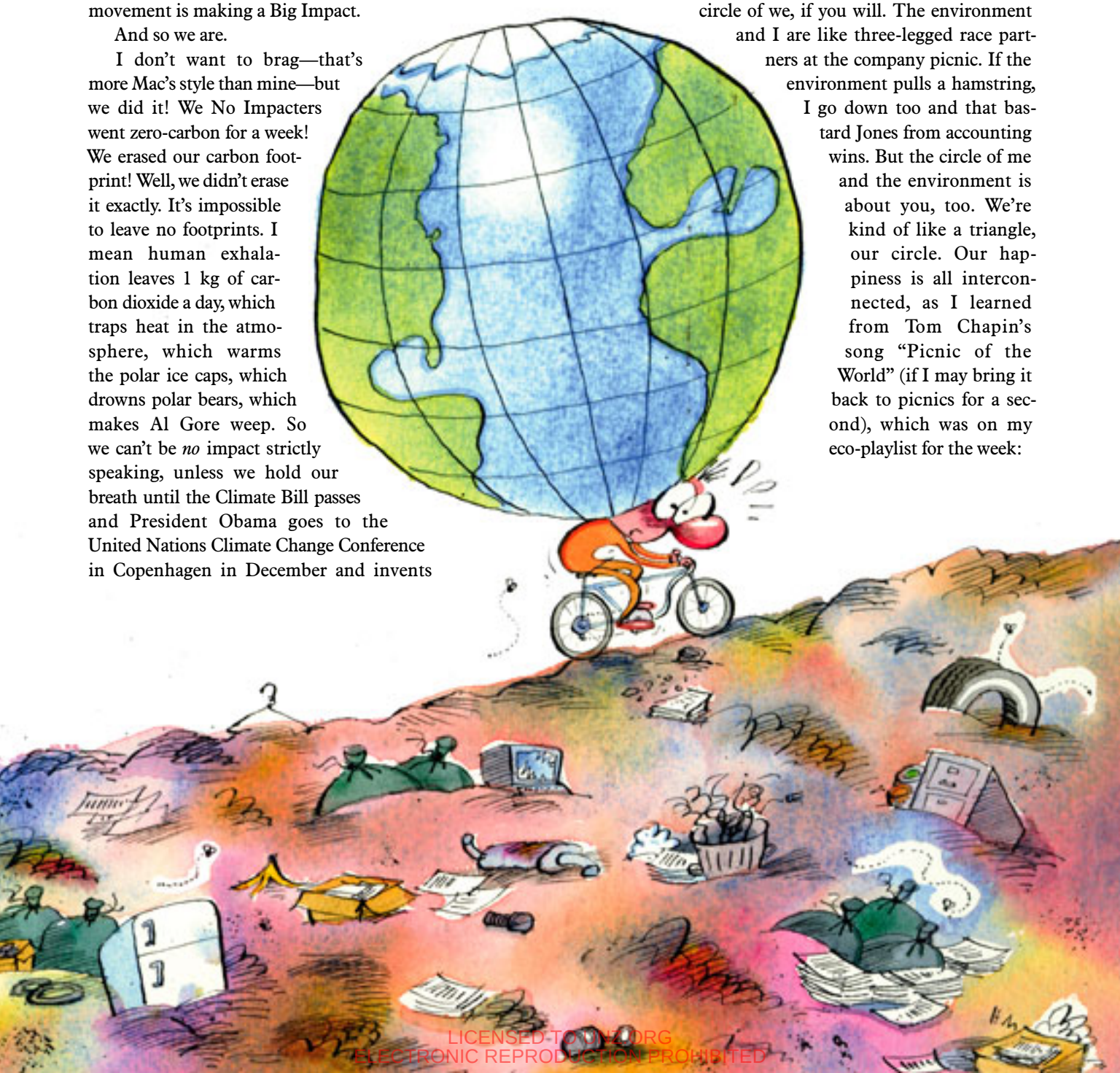
could write about himself in his recently released book, *No Impact Man: The Adventures of a Guilty Liberal who Attempts to Save the Planet and the Discoveries He Makes about Himself and Our Way of Life in the Process*, which prompted Stephen Colbert to ask, "What is the carbon footprint of that title?" (Yes, the book is printed on dead trees, but with 100 percent postconsumer recycled paper and cardboard, processed without chlorine, and manufactured with energy generated by bio-gas.) He's also featured in a companion *No Impact* documentary (yes, I'm sure he has a perfectly good eco-excuse for the carbon footprint left by filmmaking, too). All modesty aside, then, the No Impact movement is making a Big Impact.

And so we are.

I don't want to brag—that's more Mac's style than mine—but we did it! We No Impacters went zero-carbon for a week! We erased our carbon footprint! Well, we didn't erase it exactly. It's impossible to leave no footprints. I mean human exhalation leaves 1 kg of carbon dioxide a day, which traps heat in the atmosphere, which warms the polar ice caps, which drowns polar bears, which makes Al Gore weep. So we can't be *no* impact strictly speaking, unless we hold our breath until the Climate Bill passes and President Obama goes to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December and invents green jobs and finds green solutions to intractable problems like human breathing. So let's just say I went Low Impact. If my Low Impact week was an aerobics class, it'd be the kind where I jog in place on a mini-trampoline while wearing a decorative headband.

But it sounds like I'm making No Impact Week all about me, and it's not. "The Experiment is about impacting yourself, your community, and your country," as the 17-page No Impact online guide to our carbon colonic read. ("Don't print this out!" warned organizers.) So it's not just about me, it's about the environment, even if the environment is sort of about me. I am it, and it is me—the circle of we, if you will. The environment and I are like three-legged race partners at the company picnic. If the environment pulls a hamstring, I go down too and that bastard Jones from accounting wins. But the circle of me and the environment is about you, too. We're kind of like a triangle, our circle. Our happiness is all interconnected, as I learned from Tom Chapin's song "Picnic of the World" (if I may bring it back to picnics for a second), which was on my eco-playlist for the week:



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All sitting on the same big blanket
With the same big basket
Full of sandwiches and deviled eggs
We're all drinking from the same big thermos
At the same big picnic
It's the picnic of the world

Drinking from the same thermos, Tom? Not in the age of swine flu. So maybe a better way to understand the you/me/environment/triangular/circular picnic through song would be with Nelly's smash 2002 hit, "Hot in Here." 'Cause let's face it, it is getting hot in here, with the environment feeling all greenhouse gassy from our carbon emissions. It's getting hotter over the sweep of history, that is. Technically, it hasn't lately gotten any hotter, and, in fact, it's gotten a bit colder since 1998 as the BBC just reported. So maybe we should just leave the understanding-through-eco-songs alone for the moment.

What is abundantly clear from my carbon-colonic guide and Beavan's No Impact bible is that being religiously eco-conscious isn't just about looking outward, but also about looking inward and achieving personal happiness. "You live a happier life that will result in a happier earth," Beavan writes. So that if I can make one person feel better about the environment, even myself, I've made all people feel better. That's a lot of good feeling that comes from me giving up paper towels. So I went ahead and gave the No Impact Experiment a whirl.

The way the experiment works is that each day emphasizes new actions, which then roll over to the next day, so that by the end of the week, all actions are working in concert, and you've been transformed from a conspicuously consumptive carbon monster into a virtuous person who can then go on to lecture less virtuous people about how they're destroying the earth.

One of Beavan's big "ideas for change" will sound drastic to American ears: "Stop shopping." I figured that over the last two years with the near collapse of our economy, we already had that one covered. But not good enough, apparently, as Beavan rails against our tendency to acquire too much stuff, over 90 percent of which ends up trashed within six months. His practical suggestions, then, range from "shopping in your own closet" (I put one of my own bespoke suits on layaway—it was expensive) to finding "hand-me-loves (aka hand-me-downs)" through activities such as dumpster diving. He even suggests throwing a clothing-swap party with friends.

Throwing a clothing-swap party is out of the question on account of my being straight. So I query several friends by email, asking what they'd be willing to give me, and if I had anything they'd like in exchange. A fishing buddy offers to send me his Redskins-themed Clinton Portis thong. *Slate*'s press critic, Jack Shafer, suggests that a warm bag of urine mixed with wood ash would yield "a nice, non-toxic fertilizer." Greg Gutfeld, the host of Fox's *Red Eye*, writes, "I have some workout tights! Some old workout shirts. A soiled eye patch. A 'Celebrate Diversity' T-shirt in rainbow colors. A ball gag. In exchange, I would prefer chaps." Clearly, dumpster diving is the way to go.

Consumption Day happens to coincide with my 10-year-old son Luke's birthday. So I figure I'll find him, as Beavan puts it, some "treasure untold" for a present in one of the many dropoff dumps in Calvert County, Maryland. Luke and his six-year-old brother, Dean, come with me. First, however, we stop by the Help Association secondhand store to try our luck there. It's closed. So we peer in the window at a pink "Race for the Cure" T-shirt, an old fondue pot, or a pig figurine that I could've secured for him had it been open.

"What's this place for?" asks Luke.

"Mostly for poor people who need help," I respond.

"But we're not poor," he says, concerned. "We're just gonna take poor people's stuff for your story."

We shove off to a series of dumps. At the first one, the kids climb up on a dumpster and pop the lid open. While trying to decipher what's more valuable—the Snyder's pretzel box or the Big Gulp cup—a large man in a large truck arrives to tow away a full trash receptacle. He sees us hovering over a discarded kitchen chair and a bedpost, and starts yelling at his coworkers, "What are those kids doing over there?" We're apparently not supposed to be walking around the premises while equipment is being moved. But Dean thinks he said, "What are those geeks doing over there?" It makes him angry, and he's lost

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the will to treasure hunt. "C'mon," I say to the kids, "We're going to a better dump."

We can't find one though. Most are closed on Sunday, though we sneak into a few anyway. At one after another—we put some 90 miles on the SUV looking for carbon-neutral gifts—my kids make the best of it. We ignore "no scavenging" signs, and I tell one attendant that my kids "need to find treasures untold for a school project." Dean laughs at this when the attendant assents. "That guy will fall for anything," he snorts. My kids are not only learning how to save the earth, they're learning how to lie like pros, making the trip both inspirational and educational.

Without going through trash bags, they call out when they suspect they've discovered a treasure: "Look Daddy, a rubber band . . . a puzzle piece . . . a broken rake." At the county landfill, we dodge buzzards and guano to fish out an old scooter. Dean wants it immediately. It's kind of like a scooter he already has, except not as good and rusty. Luke takes a pass on a Malibu Barbie bike. After many hours, I remain birthday presentless for my son, though I like to think I've given him the gift of experience. Good thing his mom has a new Lego set on the way.

After aborting the dumpster-diving mission, I feel like I need a true success for my first day. So I follow Beavan's advice and make homemade body products. I look up a recipe for a moisturizer on thedailygreen.com. It calls for baby oil and mayonnaise. I hate mayonnaise: the smell of it, the texture of it, everything about it. It's so . . . mayonnaise-y. But I dutifully mix it up and smear it on my face and ashy elbows with a barbecue brush, gagging all the while. My wife, Alana, mocks me. "You're putting mayo and baby oil on your face? That's gross. And you'll break out."

"You don't get it," I say, returning fire at the woman and her uppity Arbonne skin care products. "You're either part of the carbon problem or part of the solution."

I sit down to peruse reader comments under the mayo/baby-oil moisturizer instructions and forget about my elbows, smearing mayonnaise on our couch, which I then have to remind myself not to wipe up with paper towels. One reader is shocked the recipe is even there, since baby oil is a petroleum product. I've been had. My face has been *greenwashed*—the term for companies which cynically promote green products as marketing gimmicks, in order to prey on eco-suckers (there is even a "green" brothel in Berlin that offers discounts to johns who arrive by bike). Worse still, I smell like a bad cafeteria sandwich.

I grab my wife's exfoliating wash and run to the sink, scrubbing the goo off my face. With all this moisturizing/exfoliating activity, I'm starting to think I'm not too straight for a clothing-swap party after all.

I wake up this morning and look in the mirror. As per my wife's prediction, I have two mayo-and-baby-oil inspired blemishes. But my elbows are silky as a cat's ass.

Today is all about trash. I'm supposed to make a lot less of it. Therefore, to raise my trash consciousness, I collect all my trash from yesterday in a special bag and inventory it. Beavan is right: It's shocking what you can learn about yourself from going through your own trash. Though I have no problem hopping in a car and driving 100 miles to go fishing on the spur of the moment, I'm not a total eco-Philistine. I've recycled paper and plastics for 15 years. While on the rivers that I love, I bark at fishermen who litter or who try to keep fish in catch-and-release waters. I willingly watched *An Inconvenient Truth* without holding it against doomsday prophet Gore that, according to the Tennessee Center for Policy Research, his Nashville home burns 20 times the electricity of the average American household.

Still, as I catalog my refuse, it feels like evidence in support of Beavan's indictment. The average person carelessly produces 4.6 pounds of trash per day. Even when conscientious of the trash I was producing: Four lemons quartered for iced tea, plus the plastic bag in which they came. Two gallon-sized tea bags (I scrupulously buy fair trade tea. I go to Safeway. I have money. They have Lipton. I give them the money. They give me the tea. Fair trade). Thirty-six empty packets of Sweet'N'Low. Two Diet Coke cans. A Polly-O string cheese wrapper. Lots of paper towels—some wet from wipe-ups, some wrapped around pistachio shells. A napkin. A newspaper I had to lay on the floor to inventory my trash. A butcher knife. Bloody Isotoner gloves. Size 12 Bruno Magli shoes. Looking at all this refuse, I learn something disturbing about my lifestyle: I use way too much artificial sweetener.

Part of my day involves food shopping as Tuesday is going to be Transportation Day, and I will lose the use of my car until the end of the experiment. We are advised to prepare accordingly. But here too, we are to be mindful of trash, bringing only reusable bags and not buying food that

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comes in throwaway packaging. I also spend some of the day clocking the odometer to mark off how far I will be biking if travel becomes necessary. We are supposed to make "no trash travel kits"—all sorts of reusable containers—though there isn't much point as once I lose my car in my Southern Maryland exurb, there are few places near enough to travel by bike, unless you count the cemeteries, old tobacco barns, and my local convenience store/gas station where the only locally grown products are state lotto tickets.

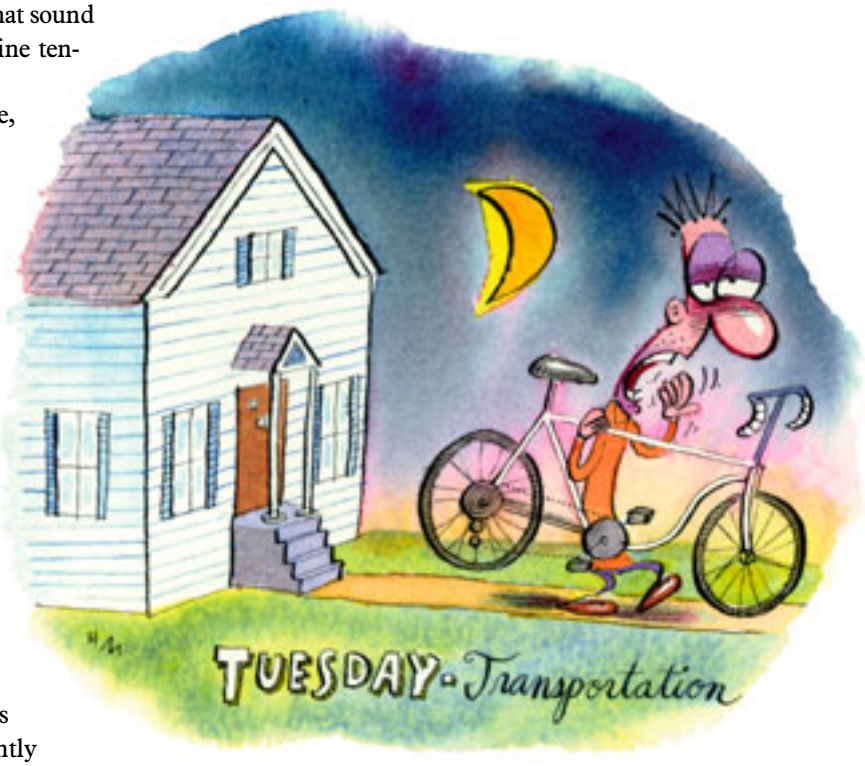
I do, however, stop by Safeway. I buy environmentally-friendly deodorant, Tom's of Maine—aluminum-free, made with natural hops, which I've always preferred in a glass instead of under my arms. On Beavan's advice, I look for a straight razor, instead of the disposable offerings that sound like souped-up race cars (Mach 3) or top-of-the-line tennis rackets (Quattro Titanium). No luck.

With the eliminate-throwaway-packaging rule, it's a short shopping run. Ninety-five percent of the grocery store is off-limits to me. So I mainly shop for the fruit and vegetables I won't be able to find at the farm stands. Beavan, like all locavores, worships at the altar of locally grown food, which not only supports the local farmer and tends to be more organic, but also reduces carbon-emissions due to reduced "food miles" in transport. Though this can be an errant assumption. The *Economist* reported, in Britain, it was more environmentally advisable to truck in tomatoes from Spain during the winter than to grow them in local greenhouses, and large supermarkets—with their high volume, central distribution depots, lean supply chains, and full trucks—can sometimes be more food-miles efficient than a local-food system where produce is moved in a larger number of smaller, less efficiently packed vehicles.

As a good eco-citizen, I'm giving up meat as well. Though I'm not entirely sure why. Fact: A cow emits 50 million metric tons of methane gas per year. Fact: I eat lots of cows. Ergo, I'm reducing methane gas emissions. Yet, while I'm sticking to the program, I don't want to take too many chances on the unappetizing root vegetables that plague our farm stands this time of year. So it's navel oranges from South Africa, avocados from Chile and Mexico, sweet onions from Peru. At least the tortilla chips I buy are from Texas. They come in a plastic bag, and sort of cut against the program, but what am I supposed to eat my signature guacamole with? My fingers? I'm not a savage. Plus, they're made out of white corn, making them kind of like a vegetable once removed.

There's a big glitch, however. I've forgotten my old bags. I run to the car, and find whatever I can, which turns out to be a slim Subway sub wrapper, and an unused deodorized pooper-scooper glove, with two smiling dogs on it, called a ScooPick. I apologize to the checkout lady, as she packs avocados into my pooper scooper, telling her I can't make trash and that she must get this all the time. "No," she says, eyeing me suspiciously, "actually I don't." She asks if I want to round up my total to help fight breast cancer. But she clearly doesn't give a rip about the environment. (You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.) I decline.

I take my produce home in the fragrant ScooPick. I may never eat guacamole again without thinking of a dog park.



One of the reasons I became a professional magazine writer—besides having no marketable job skills—is that I work best staying up until all hours of the night. I can generally sleep through the hours when 9-to-5ers are commuting. Not so, if I want to go to the office during No Impact Week.

Beavan's champions are always marveling at how he pulled off his year of living virtuously in the middle of Manhattan. To which I say, big deal. Anybody can get around solely by bike on a mostly flat, 13.4 mile long, 2.3 mile wide island with every boutique taste imaginable, even of the eco-exotic variety, within a short jaunt. Try doing it in Calvert County, 35 miles from Washington, D.C.

Giving up my car, my eco-sensei says, would help me "think fewer emissions and more fun, free time, and money."

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But biking 70 miles round trip would take all day. There'd be no point in going, it would be no fun, and even if it gave me more free time with my kids—which it wouldn't—I'd be too tired to play with them. So my best option is to bike to the Park'n'Ride lot and catch a semi-environmentally friendly commuter bus.

This turns out to be a difficult trick. The last bus leaves for D.C. at 7:20 A.M., a time at which I'm either usually still sleeping or just thinking about getting up. Consequently, I wake up at 5 A.M., to shove off by 5:30. Outside, there isn't even a hint of sunrise, and it is a moonless night. I'm riding in pitch darkness, except for the headlights of cars whizzing by on a busy four-lane highway with erratic shoulders. The trek is seven miles of taxing hills. (I wear a heart monitor when I bike. On regular rides over flat terrain, I'm in the 120-135 beats per minute range. On this one, with a messenger bag on my back, I stay up around 160 most of the ride.)

It's so dark I can't see my gears and accidentally upshift on steep climbs. My mountain-bike chain pops off twice. (Since I hadn't greased it in a while, I can fit it back on with minimal mess, though I still look like I've been fingerprinted.) I ride warily in the darkness, keeping my eyes trained on the faint glint of the guardrail, and the white highway line of the shoulder. But at one point, my bike hits something squishy and nearly kicks out from under me. I stop and wait for passing cars to illuminate what I hit. It's a dead possum. At least I think it was dead. It might have just been playing possum, in which case, playtime is now certainly over.

The Park'n'Ride is behind Safeway, so I go into the supermarket bathroom, wash the grease off my hands, and try to make myself presentable. Wearing a ski hat and thermal jacket, the brightest yellow one I have in the interest of not getting plowed into by commuters, I'm drenched with sweat even in the 39-degree early morning air. With my ineffectual Tom's of Maine honeysuckle-rose eco-deodorant—not my usual "Cool Wave" triple-protection Gillette—I smell like a whiff of Febreze spritzed over the crowd at a Phish concert.

I miss the bus that's already there while searching for a place to tie up my bike (it's the only bike in a parking lot full of hundreds of cars). I take my place in a single-file line waiting for the next one, where people stand wordlessly and catatonically under the lutescent light of a big hangar. It feels like I'm trapped in a Hopper painting. By the time I get on the next bus, I've been on the road for an hour. That's the amount of time it usually takes me to get from door to desk in my car, which doesn't have rules against profanity and drinking fluids, as the bus does. And I still have 28 miles to go in the thickest rush-hour traffic, with nine stops before mine once we get to the city.

All told, it takes me two-and-a-half hours to get to work, though I had to leave so early that I'm still at the office an hour before anyone else. On the upside, there's no point in staying long. I had to leave my laptop at home, since I didn't want it slamming against my back or getting wet on the biking leg if it rained. Plus, if I want to get back to Calvert County, a 5:50 P.M. bus is my last call. If I miss it, I have to sleep at the office. No Impact Man was right. Not commuting with my car turns out to give me all kinds of additional free time. Because if I have to rely on the bike/commuter bus system, there's not a chance in hell I'm coming back to the office this week, thus reducing my commuting time and my vehicular emissions to zero.

On the way home from dumpster-diving on Sunday when I still had the use of my car, I'd stopped by a farm stand, run by Mark Cox, who also runs Mark's Lawn Service, about ten miles down the road from where I live. It's a place I sometimes take my children in the fall, letting them jump on his pumpkin-shaped balloon-bounce, one of the nods to agri-tourism that farmers tend to make these days.

Cox admitted it's tough-going, eating local this time of year unless I want to eat pumpkins and mums. (In bad frost years, he imports pumpkins from Canada to keep customers happy). I told him of my experiment, so he graciously loaded me up (gratis) with squashes that even he had trouble identifying, and Indian corn, which he swore I can pop

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in a microwave just by sticking the entire cob in a paper bag. (I tried it, and, after I finally got my smoke-choked fire alarm shut off, it looked like a science experiment gone seriously wrong.)

Cox, a fourth-generation farmer, appreciates how locavores emphasize eating locally grown food. But of course, a lot of their do-goodnik brethren are why his stand is now loaded up with mystery squashes. He used to be a tobacco farmer, which pays the highest yield per acre of any crop, until the smoking-ban nannies pushed the state to pay farmers not to grow the evil leaf, hastening the demise of the local tobacco-market auctions for those who still wanted to stay in the game. For a farmer, it can be pretty hard making up that income pushing decorative gourds to eco-yuppies.

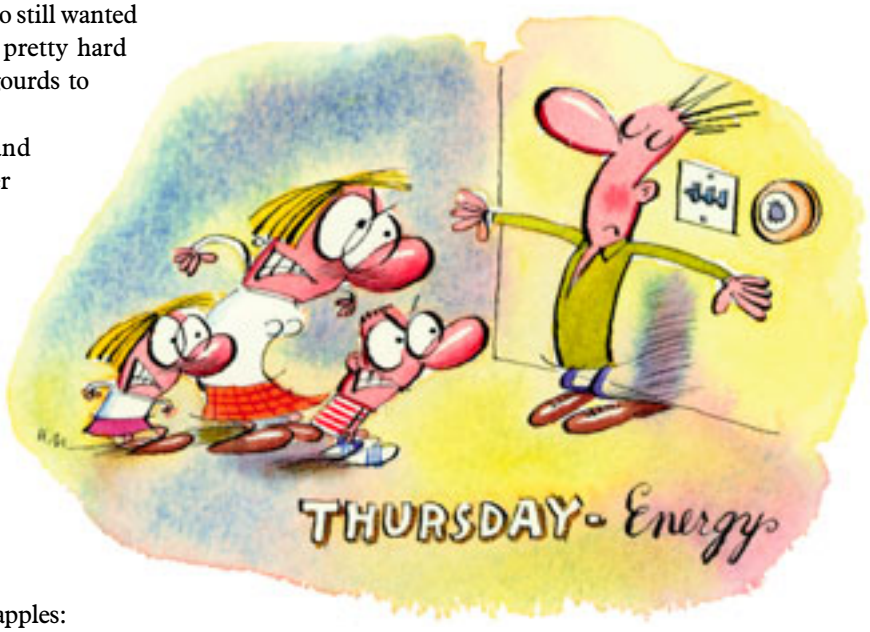
And man cannot live on Indian corn and spaghetti squash alone. I realize, even after my Safeway run, that I'm missing amenities, such as tomatoes for my guacamole. So I pedal eight miles to the closest farm stand that has them, Trott's in Dunkirk. It's the place I buy the world's best sweet corn and tomatoes all summer long. Now, what's left of the tomatoes are too green and a little end-of-season iffy. I buy a load of them anyway, along with an eggplant. I'm not a big turnips guy, so I ask Betty, who is manning the stand, if anybody eats mums. "The deer in my yard," she says.

Much more appetizing are the buckets of apples: Fuji and Crispin, Red Delicious and Jonagold. I buy whatever I can fit in my messenger bag, now tottering with about 10 extra poorly distributed pounds which will make the ride home an undertaking, and I ask her where they grow them. I've never noticed any apple trees around here. "We get them from an Amish guy in Pennsylvania," she says.

It turns out, buying locally grown food is no easy feat, even when you're surrounded by farmers. I figure I might fill out my menu a little easier at a full-blown farmer's market, much like the one in Manhattan where Beavan shops. But the nearest one is a 32-mile round trip by bike, 16 miles of which I'd have to be hauling heavy produce. I'll eat squash-kabobs before doing that. But I get curious, and want to know what kind of locally grown delights I'm missing.

I call the market and am put through to a produce manager. I ask her if their stuff is homegrown. "Depends what you mean by homegrown," she says. "Some is from Lancaster, Pennsylvania" (the market's Amish-run). "But most of our stuff is grown in the United States." Does that mean some produce comes from foreign countries? "Yeah," she admits. "We get some from New Zealand and Chile."

Nobody's pure. Even the Amish, it seems, are importing from the "Picnic of the World." On the way home from Trott's, I swing my bike by the ultimate farm stand (Safeway) to buy some locally baked French bread. It comes in a slip-off wax paper wrapper, which in the interest of staying true to the program, I ditch. One of the bakery employees squawks at me when I tell him why I don't want it. "You have to take the paper," he insists. "We have to charge you, and what are we supposed to do, put the barcode on the bread?"



In my house, Energy Day could also be called Resistance Day, the day in which my family officially gets sick of me, as I turn off the heat and lights, cook my vegetables on the grill, and tell them that aside from retaining our refrigeration capacity so that all my farm-fresh produce doesn't spoil, we will attempt to go without electricity for 24 hours, and that there will be no more television all week. My *Guitar Hero*-playing children don't look amused. Dean interrupts his "Eye of the Tiger" solo to shoot the death-stare: "Tell your boss he's taking this too far."

I make a deal with the kids. I hand them the remote control and tell them, if they can keep it away from me for five minutes, they can still watch television, though not in front of me. I set the timer. I'm still faster than my carbon nemeses in the straightaways, but around the tight corners, they can elude me for a long time. The second I say "go," Dean runs upstairs to his room with the remote, locks the door, and runs out the clock. It's not pretty. But a win is a win.

My wife loses a best-of-seven coin toss, however,

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when protesting the rest. ("You can go live in the basement," she says, "it's cold down there.") I regularly chop wood in my backyard, so earlier in the day, I'd split a bunch of aged white oak, poplar, and locust rounds in preparation, justifying the carbon output to myself because I burn it hot and clean.

So we spend the night in the living room, playing Uno with the lights and heat off in front of the fireplace. The fire and a dozen or so lit candles still don't equal the illumination of one energy saving light bulb (which I later read are more carbon-efficient than this alternative). Since it's hard to see, however, I've taken to wearing a dorky hat with a built-in battery light that I own for night fishing. I walk various family members to the bathroom or the kitchen with it like a tour-guide at Carlsbad Caverns, them muttering all the way. The hatlight is also the only way we can tell the blue from the green color scheme on the cards. The family keeps complaining that I'm shining the light in their eyes. It feels like they're playing cards at a sobriety checkpoint after getting pulled over by a coalminer.

"I could use some wine," Alana says. "I wish we had white."

"I'd get it for you," I respond, "but I can't use my car."

We split a bottle of red instead and settle in for the evening. In the darkness, our lives slow to a crawl, in the best way. There are stories and songs and me whipping the piss out of my kids in Uno, then bragging, then having them complain to their mother about my bragging, while I insist I'm just celebrating my good fortune. Dean sits on the coffee table, legs folded Indian-style, chanting "ohhmm," which he probably saw on *Spongebob Square Pants*, though he's lost all interest in television, for the night at least.

Surprisingly, the No Impact guide doesn't ask me to shut down the computer for the day, even if it encouraged me to throw a blanket over my television, as well as to "Unplug! Turn it off, Power down. Go off the grid." In fact, it asks me to "blog or vlog about your experience conserving energy here," as well as to take my brief end-of-the-day survey, which I must take every day, about how anxious or satisfied or fulfilled I feel living a simpler, more virtuous life. My life, truth be told, has actually become quite a bit more complicated, with all the logistics planning, the no-trash making, the local-food vegetarian menu-finding, the four-hour bike-errand-running, the candle-lighting, the eco-conscious nightly podcast watching. Unless it's your full-time vocation, as it was Beavan's, it's pretty exhausting.

At about 8:50 P.M., I'm in the full glowing warmth of Chianti's embrace. The fire rages. My dog Moses, who nearly set his tail aflame with the abundance of candles and then tried to eat one, is snoring big bear-dog snores by the hearth. The children have been tucked into bed. I give my lady friend the eye, figuring maybe she has what I have in mind. I flip on my hatlight and ask her if she wants to play "Canary in the Coalmine."

But dammit, I remember, I can't. I have to spend my No Electricity-evening watching No Impact Man talk climate science and fossil fuels and the merits of Wal-Mart's Green Label plan on his nightly hour-long 9 P.M. podcast. What good is turning out your lights if you can't broadcast the fact that you have? Even as Beavan lived without electricity, over his year-long experiment, a documentary crew filmed him flipping off his breaker, *Good Morning America* checked in with him throughout the year, the *New York Times* came to his house and ran a front-page spread in their Home & Garden section. Suffering for the environment might be noble. Suffering in silence is unthinkable.

Alana gives me a your-loss-buddy look and traipses upstairs in the dark to watch *The Office*. "Remember," she says, "The kids liberated our television. Tomorrow, the lights come back on."

On Friday morning, the bill for electricity day comes due. There is fresh mint and red-onion debris everywhere from the potato salad I made in the dark. Wood-beetle shavings from the firewood I carried in are sprinkled all over the rug. Wax drippings from using candles as light cover the hardwoods, making our living room look like an S&M dungeon. My wife gives me a stern lecture about how she isn't the maid

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I am turning into an OCD patient trying to meet all the challenges. I measure and weigh the consequences of the most necessary consumption, every genetic or learned impulse turned into a disputatious wrestling match. I am not living, I'm self-litigating.

and how, eco-consciousness aside, I need to be mindful of cleaning up my own personal environment.

I agree with her completely, then take the passive-aggressive route. Today is conserve water day, so we are under strict orders to not flush toilets unless necessary: "If it's yellow, let it mellow." I mark my territory in every bathroom, like a dog reasserting his property rights.

The average American, Beavan tells us, uses 1,189 gallons of water a day. We are supposed to keep track of our water consumption. I wash my hands out of a pot. I bathe with a cold wet rag and keep track of how many gallons I rinse with. I track every ice cube consumed. For the day, I end up using only about 11 gallons, plus 52 cubes, not terribly far off the average consumption in water-starved sub-Saharan African countries.

I'm pretty proud of myself. Why, I'm not sure. My house is on well water, and we sit over a huge underground aquifer in no danger of running dry. I can't quite connect how taking shrinkage-inducing sponge baths or restricting ice-cube use is going to help the good people of Kenya, who are water starved. Perhaps I could bottle potable water and ship it to them—but I don't even want to think about what the carbon footprint of using that many plastic receptacles plus transport fuel would be. It'd probably break my online carbon calculator.

Perhaps any sense of accomplishment is evident because even though this is a self-conscious journalism experiment, it really is turning me into an OCD patient, trying to meet all the challenges. I'm becoming a scold to myself and others, the citation-writing OSHA inspector of my own life. I measure and weigh the consequences of the most necessary consumption, every genetic or learned impulse turned into a disputatious wrestling match—should I or shouldn't I? I am not living, I'm self-litigating.

Most leisure activities or electives—the things which give your life fullness and sweetness—are out of the question. Dark chocolate? It comes in tinfoil packaging. Sex? You can't recycle condoms, and birth control pills introduce hormones into the water supply which confuse fish genitalia. Fishing? Well, I'm sure there's all matter of problems with that. I really don't care.

Despite being in the middle of an ascetic, Thoreauvian experiment, I'm no Thoreau. But then, neither was Henry David Thoreau. Just have a look at *The Thoreau You Don't Know* by Robert Sullivan. While living at Walden, Thoreau went to town just about every day. He read newspapers, had his mother do his laundry, and was the last to leave at parties. He gave shelter to the workers who were harvesting ice from Walden Pond in an act of filthy commerce brokered by his landlord, Emerson. He caught and ate fish (he once accidentally torched 300 acres of Walden woods trying to cook fish in an old stump). He even slaughtered a pesky woodchuck, who'd ravaged his bean field, then devoured the critter, reporting that he had a "musky flavor."

I want to take my own kids fishing, having promised them a crack at some stocker rainbow trout, which are planted around here by Department of Natural Resources trucks twice a year. Since my boys are too inexperienced and too short to wade the trout rivers I fish up north, battling for space around these power-bait puddles with greedy bubbas filling their buckets is about the only crack they get at holding a rainbow.

Since I can't use my car, however, I can't get them there—it's too far for them on bikes balancing their rods. So I bike the 4.5 miles myself and have my wife drop them off by car with our gear. When we arrive, the pond is already full of bubbas holding the choice positions and bombing the water. The dumb tank fish have been sufficiently warned, and they want nothing to do with us. Our three-man take for the day: a little bluegill.

Time has gotten away from me, however, as it frequently does when I fish—which is sort of the point. I want to make today count for the kids because, by the time I get off my experiment, the fish will have been cleaned out by the non-catch-and-releasers. If any rainbows happen to be left, they'll have Ph.D.s in fly evasion.

But we're supposed to be at my mother-in-law's for my niece's 18th birthday dinner at 5 P.M. She came all the way home from college in North Carolina just for it. But it's 4:30 now. My wife picks up the kids, and takes them home. By the time I bike to the house, they're ready to zip down the driveway without me. (I'm planning to allow myself a shotgun-riding trip as it's a place my wife was going anyway—commuter-bus logic.) I start an unattractive argument, throwing a fit about how they need to wait, how I need to take a cold sponge-bath, to brush my teeth with a baking soda concoction, and to

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prepare my arugula salad in a reusable container for that night's dinner. They're gone before I can finish, already 30 minutes late having waited for me to return by bike.

I'm stuck at home, alone with my principles. I figure I might as well read Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* by candlelight. (A heckling colleague told me it's much better if I add "between the sheets" after every sentence.) But first, I take a freezing sponge bath, writing down my water consumption (3 gallons). Then I stomp a small load of laundry in the tub—no harmful detergent. Then I make an inedible spaghetti-squash concoction from a bad Internet recipe, which I end up throwing into the woods, figuring the deer can take their chances.

I settle down with *Silent Spring*. It's better than I thought it'd be: "Future historians may well be amazed by our distorted sense of proportion between the sheets."

Today is the day I'm to give up everything (as if I already haven't) and take "some time back for yourself . . . to reflect on the well-being of yourself and the planet." The guide asks, "How do you usually spend your day off? Consider how different—if at all—this day will be."

Because of the no meat, no packaged food, no hot shower, no television, no car, no electricity (aside from my laptop and a single reading light—my hatlight went dead), and no fun generally—I figure it'll be a little different than usual. In fact, a package arrives by mail, an order I'd put in before I was prohibited from buying anything new. It's from a fly shop I frequent in Idaho. Inside are little packets of Clousers and Crazy Charlies and Surf Candies. They call October "Rocktober" around here—as in rockfish, the local name for stripers. And these are the flies that should be bringing to hand all manner of fish in the shallows of the Chesapeake Bay right now, before our striper friends flee to deep winter holes or migrate south and the bite is off until spring.

Of course, the bay is too far of a bike ride while carrying my 9-weight rod and my stripping basket. Without my car, I also can't capitalize on the last profitable weeks of smallmouth bass fishing at my favorite breathtaking stretch of Potomac River in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Neither can I get to my kayak spot on the Patuxent River along which the blackjack oaks and box elders and swamp hickories are now bedecked in their autumn finery, nor to the numerous trails I often bike when not riding to Park'n'Rides next to belching cars on busy highways. It'll be nice when all this simple living's over. It's making me miss nature.

Instead, I spend all day on the Internet, catching up with the endless No Impact blogs, vlogs, and tweets. Random Twitter sampling: "For #noimpact week, I am suffering through a nasty cold with a handkerchief, instead of tissues. Kinda awesome, or kinda icky? I vote both." The high priest of eco-virtuousness, Thoreau, would, I suspect, find the whole communication icky, as he prophesied social networking, when he wrote in *Walden*,

> We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the Old World some weeks nearer to the New; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough.

My No Impact blogging/vlogging/Twittering circle seems unconcerned that the information and communication technology sector is responsible for about 2 percent of all global carbon emissions—some say slightly more than air travel. And air travel itself is a pretty serious concern, according to Beavan, who went so far as refusing to get on a plane to visit relatives during his year. "One long-haul flight causes the same carbon emissions as an entire year of the average American's driving," he wrote in *No Impact Man.*

It seems our eco-doom is no longer as pressing a concern. As I peruse Beavan's book-promotion schedule on his blog, I count scads of cross-country jaunts—presumably too far to reach by bike. He'd have to bypass a lot of Charmin to make up for them. Beavan recently told the Associated Press that he tries to compensate for the dam-

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age by requiring those who pay for his travel to make a substantial donation to a renewable energy project.

So while I fret over turning on my lights or taking my children fishing five minutes from my house, my eco-guru is erasing all my carbon conservation, as well as his entire year of no-impacting, with just one or two of the many plane rides he takes to promote his book. I think I'm starting to understand No Impact Man when he writes, "Living our values across all areas of our individual lives—from the private to the public—demonstrates an integrity and a conviction that can help persuade the skeptics."

So some of us have to reduce our own carbon emitting. While some get people to pay other people to do it for them: an integrity and conviction offset, of sorts.

On my last day, I'm supposed to "give back" by volunteering with an environmental organization, but to reach St. Michael's, where I can join a Save the Bay volunteer group planting oyster spats on reefs, would mean 154 miles round trip by bike. So instead, I bike to Chesapeake Church, about a mile down the road, and volunteer at our church's food pantry.

Though I live in the sixth wealthiest county in the United States, 5,000 residents still live in poverty, and the vast majority of those who avail themselves of the food giveaways here—the only criterion being that they walk through the door—are children and their working poor parents (they put in their 40 hours a week at jobs that don't pay enough for them to feed their families). In the church parking lot, food distribution leader Debbie Weber, in dark jeans with scuffs on the knees from bending down to pick up bags or wipe up spills, oversees a large delivery truck staffed with volunteers taking in church members' contributions for the second week of a two-week food drive, which has brought in 6,651 pounds of food so far. There will be several more to reach their 14,000-pound annual goal.

Across the grounds at the pantry, over a dozen volunteers work for a couple hours full-tilt, unloading the truck and stocking the shelves, and more food is still coming in from additional members who missed the truck. One carbon-monster wheels up in his chariot-of-death—a Cadillac Escalade—and unpacks an entire SUV of plastic-bagged groceries, bought at his own expense.

As I join in the shelf-stocking, putting the boxed mac'n'cheese, canned Dinty Moore beef stew, offbrand toilet paper, and packaged Ramen noodles in their respective places, I realize how these needy carbon-emitters—the church helps 100 families per week—wouldn't make it for a second in the No Impact Experiment. Where's the locally grown, unpackaged delights? Where's the exotic farmer's market daikon radishes and lovage and baby fennel and swiss chard? Where is all the fresh food that helps our environment heal and guilty upper-middle-class white people feel better about themselves when ordering it from their Community-Supported Agriculture cooperative?

I bike home and end the eight-day experiment several hours early, deciding No Impact has had enough impact on me. I jump in my car and drive to the bay, where I fly fish for stripers off my favorite rock jetty. Releasing what I catch, I watch the setting sun while feeling a cool autumn wind hit my face. I order takeout Chinese food (the first meal I've eaten all week with my family), and put my General Tso's Chicken container in the recycle bin when I'm done. I take a hot shower, turn on my lights, pour myself a tall bourbon (without measuring my ice cubes or splash of water), and watch *Mad Men* on television.

And how do I feel? Like a moral failure, a carbon monster, an eco-sellout? Not even close. In fact, I feel positively Thoreauvian. For as Thoreau once wrote in a dead-tree letter to a friend: "Do what you love. Know your own bone; gnaw at it, bury it, unearth it, and gnaw it still. Do not be too moral. You cheat yourself out of much life so. Aim above morality. Be not simply good, be good for something." ♦

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Louis Armstrong, 1953

Man with a Horn

Louis Armstrong, pioneer BY TED GIOIA

Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) enjoyed a charmed and charming life. His recordings from the 1920s changed the course of jazz, setting in place a heroic conception of the soloist that continues to reverberate in the music today. And his artistry was matched by immense popularity—not always a given in the jazz world, which views hit records with suspicion. In 1964 Armstrong even knocked the Beatles off the top perch in the *Billboard* chart with "Hello Dolly," and at age 63 became the oldest musician ever to record a number-one hit.

Ted Gioia is the author of The History of Jazz *and, most recently,* The Birth (and Death) of the Cool.

Yet Armstrong has not been served well by his chroniclers. Robert Goffin wrote the first Armstrong biography, *Horn of Plenty*, back in 1947, but this Belgian lawyer was caught up in his strange personal vision of jazz musicians as "noble savages." He depicted the trumpeter in the light of his "Deep Congo" ancestry—which, Goffin assures us, accounts for the artist's docility and mental acumen. James Lincoln Collier's 1983 study *Louis Armstrong: An American Genius* was more thorough and detailed, but hardly more staid. He categorized much of Armstrong's repertoire as "'good darky' tunes out of the coon-song tradition" and adopted a polemical, revisionist stance that spurred sharp disagreement from other scholars.

Pops
A Life of Louis Armstrong
by Terry Teachout
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,
496 pp., $30

In recent years, admirers have often relied on Laurence Bergreen's flawed *Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life* from 1997, which suffers from the author's limited knowledge of jazz. Bergreen even repeats colorful rumors about Buddy Bolden, the supposed father of jazz, with apparently no realization that New Orleans scholars had disproved these tales back in the 1970s. Sad to say, readers might be better served by Armstrong's own memoir,

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Satchmo (1954), even though it only covers his life up to 1922.

Given this history, readers have been justifiably excited in anticipation of Terry Teachout's in-depth biography. Teachout is an astute critic who knows jazz deeply—and has even played it as a bassist—but is largely immune to the increasingly inward-focused attitudes that hinder the effectiveness of so many contemporary critics. He has previous biographies of H.L. Mencken and George Balanchine to his credit, and has written strong, supple criticism of dance, theater, and cinema. In short, Teachout seems perfectly suited to tackle this seminal figure whose career rarely stayed within the usual boundaries of jazz.

Teachout captures this broader context with great skill. His rich cast of characters includes not only musicians and record industry figures, but criminals and monarchs, TV personalities and movie stars. We follow Armstrong at a 1932 performance with King George V in attendance, tossing off the intro "This one's for you, Rex"—then playing (unthinkingly?) "I'll Be Glad When You're Dead, You Rascal, You!" Elsewhere, we get a detailed look—the best I have read anywhere—of Armstrong's dealings with the Mob. This artist first made his reputation in Al Capone's Chicago, and even at the end of his life, his financial situation was affected by underworld influences. At other points we encounter Sammy Davis Jr., Johnny Cash, Leonard Bernstein, Bing Crosby, and Pope Pius XII, among other names worth dropping. My favorite anecdote tells of Herbert von Karajan berating the Vienna Philharmonic because its players can't maintain a tempo as well as Armstrong's band.

Teachout delivers a taut and well-paced work that is astute in its critical judgments and gripping in its chronicle of the trumpeter's life and times. Yet Armstrong helped his biographers considerably by presenting them with such a storybook rags-to-riches tale. Indeed, one could hardly imagine a less auspicious beginning for an illustrious career. The surviving baptismal certificate categorized the future jazz legend as a "niger, illegitimus," the son of a 15-year-old Mary Ann Albert and Willie Armstrong, who (in the words of his son) "left us the day we were born." The baby, delivered in a wooden shack on the edge of New Orleans's red light district, was soon handed off to his grandmother while Mary Ann earned a living on her own, most likely as a prostitute.

The first time Louis Armstrong's name appeared in a newspaper, the article announced his arrest. On the last day of 1912 he celebrated New Year's Eve by firing shots from a .38 that belonged to one of his many "stepfathers." Two days later the *New Orleans Times-Democrat* reported that Louis Armstrong "discharged a revolver at Rampart and Perdido Streets" and as a result "was sent to the negro Waifs' Home." This forced institutionalization proved to be the turning point in Armstrong's life. He thrived in this disciplined environment, and soon was playing cornet with the school band. The youngster adapted so well that he was reluctant to leave when his father took custody of him in 1914. But the musical skills he had developed at the Waifs' Home held him in good stead, as he began performing to supplement the money he made hauling and shoveling coal.

Armstrong soon left manual labor behind, and began his slow ascent to the top of the jazz world. Teachout presents a colorful, well-researched account of Armstrong's rise from the riverboat band of Fate Marable to the New Orleans-based Tuxedo Brass Band, and then his move to Chicago, where he joined King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, the finest hot jazz combo in America, circa 1923.

For all his prowess with a horn, Armstrong was often passive and all too pliant offstage, and thus susceptible to the exploitation of bandleaders, booking agents, and managers. He might never have achieved fame if his wife of the time, Lil Hardin, had not prodded him to promote himself as a bandleader. Give Lil Hardin her due: The recordings that resulted—known as the Hot Fives and Hot Sevens—are universally acknowledged as the most important and influential jazz performances of the 1920s.

Armstrong's work in the 1930s and early '40s, in contrast, has often been the subject of disagreement among the experts. Critics are quick to point out the lackluster arrangements, the pedestrian song selection, and less than impressive accompanists that mar the artist's middle years. Devotees at the shrine of Satchmo tend to focus, instead, on Armstrong's trumpet work, which was virtuosic and grandiloquent even when the settings were several steps below him. Teachout tends to be an Armstrong advocate; but even when he defends his subject, he supplements his views with lengthy quotations from dissenters. The result is a frank, spirited survey that tends to give the trumpeter the benefit of the doubt, but with all opinions presented.

Louis Armstrong is a lionized figure of American musical history nowadays. As a result, even jazz fans may not realize how frequently he was attacked and ridiculed—especially in the black community. Many of his peers were embarrassed by Satchmo's joyous, uninhibited stage demeanor. Dizzy Gillespie called him a "plantation character," and Billie Holiday declared that "he Toms from the heart." James Baldwin referred to Armstrong's "old-time down home crap" in a 1957 story.

Yet Armstrong's reputation for keeping outside of politics gave him all the more clout when he jumped into the fray. His public comments in support of the Little Rock Nine, after Arkansas governor Orval Faubus ordered the National Guard to prevent them from attending a white high school, grabbed the public's attention. Teachout tells how every major newspaper, as well as CBS and NBC, covered the story, and makes clear that even members of the Eisenhower administration were paying attention. When the president decided to step in, Armstrong sent Ike a congratulatory telegram. (In typical fashion he refers to the commander in chief as "Daddy.")

Teachout is blessed with that greatest rarity in celebrity biographies: a happy ending. Armstrong enjoyed his two biggest hits—"Hello Dolly" and "What a Wonderful World"—in the last years of his life. Even his harshest critics became fans, with the once-adversarial Dizzy Gillespie showing up at Armstrong's

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70th birthday celebration at the Newport Jazz Festival. "I began to recognize," Gillespie later wrote, "what I had considered Pops' grinning in the face of racism as his absolute refusal to let anything, even anger about racism, steal the joy from his life."

That *joie de vivre* will remain Armstrong's lasting legacy. Other trumpeters have come along who hit higher notes or played faster tempos. Another New Orleans native, Wynton Marsalis, would even show that a jazz trumpeter could conquer the world of classical music and win a Pulitzer Prize. But no horn player has left us such an uplifting body of work. And now, finally—almost four decades after Armstrong's death in the summer of 1971—we have a biography that does justice to the man and his music. ♦

B&A

Prophet Disarmed

A dozen drawings as a litmus test for freedom.

BY ARCH PUDDINGTON

In early October, a German publishing house, Droste, canceled the publication of a murder mystery about honor killing out of fear that passages in the book might incite violent retaliation from Islamic extremists. That decision was the latest in a depressing series of capitulations by publishers, opera houses, and government agencies in what might be called the post-cartoon era. Whether in Europe or the United States, few today are willing to risk the consequences endured by *Jyllands-Posten*, the Danish newspaper which, in a single edition in 2005, published 12 cartoons that either depicted the Prophet Muhammad or dealt with Islamic themes.

The Cartoons That Shook the World
by Jytte Klausen
Yale, 240 pp., $35

Flemming Rose

The ensuing response—*fatwas* and death threats directed at the cartoonists and *JP* editors, boycotts of Danish products, the torching of embassies, deadly riots in a dozen cities—have clearly had the proverbial chilling effect at the level of elite media and culture. In the years since they appeared, a segment of conventional wisdom has concluded, or rationalized, that the cartoons represented an offense to Muslim believers and that, henceforth, no word or image should appear in public that "defamed" Islam. More disturbing, a process of redefining the meaning of freedom of expression has been initiated, pushed along by an aggressive and shrewd lobbying effort launched by governments notorious for their disdain for democratic liberties.

How did the democratic world reach this state of affairs? Some of the answers can be found in *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, Jytte Klausen's astute interpretive history of the crisis. Her thesis is that the cartoon crisis did not derive from a clash of civilizations between Islamic and Western cultures, as many asserted at the time, but should be regarded as a political struggle with both Danish and international dimensions. A Danish scholar currently residing in the United States, Klausen is well informed about contemporary Danish politics and seems to have interviewed just about everyone who played an important role in the crisis, including key figures in the Muslim world.

The cartoons were the idea of Flemming Rose, the *JP*'s culture editor. Rose was concerned about what he saw as a creeping self-censorship throughout Europe on Muslim-related issues—withdrawals of paintings from museum exhibit halls, difficulty in finding illustrators for children's books on Muslim themes, and so forth. He also believed that a double standard was emerging in which Islam and its icons were treated with exaggerated respect and not subject to the same kind of probing and, occasionally, mocking treatment that is meted out to other faiths or institutions of national pride. To challenge these self-imposed inhibitions, Rose hit on the idea of using cartoons in order to break two taboos: first, the taboo against criticizing Muslims; and second, the taboo against artistic portrayals of Muhammad. He asked members of the cartoonists' union (yes, Denmark has a cartoonists' union) to draw the prophet "as you see him."

The 12 cartoons were published on September 30, 2005. Contrary to the mythology that all depicted and ridiculed the Prophet, most, in fact, dealt with purely Danish issues. Some poked fun at far-right politicians; others depicted Muslims as victims. At least two, however, were meant to draw a connection between Islam and violence. Front and center here was the infamous depiction of a seated Muhammad with a bomb embedded in his turban.

The initial response was restricted to Denmark. Protests directed at *JP* were led by a group of imams and mosque activists of extremist pedigree; the most notorious imam subsequently relocated to Lebanon, where he is believed to play a role in radical Sunni politics. While Denmark's Muslim community found the cartoons irritating, few were willing to follow the lead of the radical imams, and the issue quickly faded away.

Having failed to stir the anger of local Muslims, the imams' next move was to internationalize the struggle. In December a delegation of Danish imams traveled to Egypt, apparently at the invitation of Egyptian officials, where they

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presented a portfolio of grievances to religious leaders, government figures, and leaders of such organizations as the Arab League and Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Their dossier was not limited to the original cartoons: It included statements by anti-immigrant Danish politicians and, significantly in light of subsequent events, cartoons of a sexual and deliberately offensive nature that had *not* appeared in *JP*.

Arab leaders decided that the cartoons would be a useful weapon to advance both domestic and international political agendas. They circulated the cartoons (including the false ones) to audiences throughout the Middle East, encouraged the press and clerics to proclaim outrage, and announced boycotts and diplomatic sanctions against Denmark. The campaign to stir up the masses quickly spun out of control: By late January, four months after the *JP* cartoons appeared, mobs incited by al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other extremist groups, as well as websites, text messages, and transnational television networks, attacked Danish targets throughout the Middle East and Africa. Several hundred died in the upheaval, almost all Muslims.

While much of the world interpreted the frenzied reaction as emblematic of Muslim rage against an offense to their religion, Klausen sees the controversy as driven by more calculated motives. She notes that the cartoon furor coincided with the efforts of the Bush administration to promote the expansion of democracy in the Middle East, a pillar of the administration's strategy to confront the roots of extremism and terrorism. Egypt was to occupy a central position in that strategy, and Klausen contends that the Mubarak regime actively sought to whip up mass emotions over the cartoons in order to deflect the West's attention from the democracy agenda. The Egyptians, she suggests, were sending a not-so-subtle message that the volatile Arab masses require a strong, controlling hand. Indeed, she notes that the Muslim Brotherhood, which at the time was registering some modest political gains, regarded the cartoon controversy as irrelevant and a diversion from Egypt's most pressing problems.

Thus it was the autocracies of the Middle East that pounded home the interpretation of the cartoon uproar as a clash of civilizations—cynically, but effectively—to send a warning to the United States against its plans for Middle East democratization. At the same time, Arab regimes exploited those same cartoons to influence events in the West, especially in Europe. Here the message was that Europe should control its extremists, including mainstream newspapers such as *Jyllands-Posten*, just as the Arab leadership was keeping its extremists under thumb.

While she is scrupulous in placing the events within their relevant political context—she is especially good at describing Denmark's hard-edged immigration politics—Klausen neglects to mention the horrible series of killings, often done on camera and placed on the Internet, in Iraq and elsewhere, and justified by perpetrators on religious grounds. Clearly, these murders were an important influence on the bomb-in-a-turban depiction, a drawing that falls within the boundaries of the tradition of political cartooning. The fact that it was open to differing interpretations—some, including the artist, saw it as a statement about the hijacking of religion by fanatics; others saw it as linking Islam to violence—only reinforces its artistic legitimacy.

And while Klausen conveys unusual insight into the furor's geopolitical repercussions, she seems reluctant to acknowledge the potential impact on free speech. This may, in part, stem from her misgivings about Flemming Rose and other editors at *Jyllands-Posten*. In her earnest search for evenhandedness and intellectual consistency, Klausen recounts every statement and action that might suggest poor judgment or impure motives on the newspaper's part, or on the part of the Danish prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. While she is a committed free speech advocate (she is dubious about the usefulness of Europe's pervasive Holocaust denial laws), Klausen seems ambivalent about which offends her more: the journalists who published the cartoons or the autocrats whose actions resulted in mayhem and death.

One also wonders about Klausen's assertion that the controversy "may one day result in an act of restitution to Muslims." In the wake of the cartoons, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) has carried out a relentless campaign to enshrine the defamation of Islam in international law. The OIC's success has been modest, but the flaccid response of the democracies in response to an attack on a core value of freedom is not reassuring. And while many devout Christians were highly critical of the cartoons as an offense to another faith, other critics in the democratic world have clearly been motivated by apprehension over the prospect of further violence.

This brings us to the refusal of Yale University Press to include both the cartoons and representations of Muhammad as depicted by artists through the centuries in *The Cartoons That Shook the World*. In an explanatory note, the publisher reports that it consulted "extensively" with "experts in the intelligence, national security, law

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enforcement, and diplomatic fields, as well as with leading scholars in Islamic studies and Middle East studies." The conclusion of these experts was that republishing the cartoons "ran a serious risk of instigating violence."

Klausen is surely right in stressing the Arab leadership's manipulation of the cartoons to fortify its response to demands for democratization. Her analysis, however, would have been stronger had she stressed the critical role that intimidation, on one side of this struggle, and retreat from principle, on the other, have played in bringing us to our current predicament. ♦

B&A

Europe's Temblor

The year the old order was shaken and stirred.

BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

Unless you're a Whig still excited by your last winning ticket (Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore), the year 1848 doesn't have much resonance in American history. But during that spring, revolutions swept Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Milan, Budapest, and other European cities. Seemingly impregnable authoritarian regimes suddenly collapsed, leaving behind liberated nations and millions of individuals surprised to find themselves with freedom and rights. By the following winter it had all come apart. Counter-revolutionary forces bloodily prevailed, and despite a few reforms that survived the carnage, the year became, as A.J.P. Taylor suggested, a turning point that failed to turn.

1848
Year of Revolution
by Mike Rapport
Basic Books, 496 pp., $29.95

Carl Schurz

It's to the credit of Mike Rapport, a lecturer at the University of Stirling, that he doesn't flatly say why. He just brings in a few suspects for questioning, the usual ones: new but already uncompromising and irreconcilable nationalist passions, militarism, and a radical left extremism that sabotaged liberal democratic gains, all of which would be heard from again in the 20th century.

Rapport is acutely aware that the story of simultaneous revolutions in over a dozen different places, each with local twists and turns, is bound not only to resist generalizations but to be impressively confusing. In fact, he tells us right off that the Italians adopted the year as proverbial shorthand for any major hell of a mess—*un vero quarantotto*, "a real forty-eight." His narrative method is to crosscut from one tumultuous revolutionary scene to another and back again, like a movie director with 14 subplots, and it isn't really his fault that he occasionally loses the reader in the crowd. You can read every word and still be unsure about what really happened in Tuscany and Transylvania (but then, so were the Tuscans and the Transylvanians).

The events of 1848, coming at the end of the Romantic period, have a theatrical, operatic aura. Soulful long-haired students and poets leave their garrets to join priests and prostitutes and paupers and renegade nobles at the barricades in the narrow cobblestone streets. Women defiantly face the line of advancing soldiers with bared breasts, inviting them to shoot (they do). Italy is awakened from a long slumber by two stern and honorable revolutionaries, Mazzini and Garibaldi, Hungary by the equally formidable Kossuth. A young composer named Wagner climbs a bell tower amid gunfire in Dresden to sound a revolutionary tocsin, and a pope makes his escape from suddenly riotous and republican Rome disguised as an ordinary priest. Cloaks and daggers abound.

Rapport deftly gives us the drama and its scheming or heroic or vacillating characters but doesn't have much time to evoke their settings—teeming streets in Paris or Palermo, picturesque German principalities, vast Hungarian plains. There's too much going on, and the author, like the revolutionaries themselves, is in a hurry. The revolutions started and finished fast because they came both too late and too early.

Too late because continental Europe's state and social system had been frozen in time since Waterloo in 1815, thanks in large part to Prince Klemens von Metternich. As foreign minister and chancellor of Austria, he had formed an alliance of reactionary monarchies devoted, like the newly restored Bourbons in France, to learning nothing and forgetting nothing—especially the year 1789, which was not going to be permitted to happen again. He failed to notice the start of another revolution, the industrial one, and with it the emergence of a new middle class with liberal ideals but without political power or expression, plus a new, increasingly desperate urban working class. (Marx's *Communist Manifesto* came out at the beginning of the year.)

Too early because the liberalism of the middle classes hadn't reached the peasants, still the vast majority of the population and often the X factor in the year's revolutionary equations. And because the liberal revolutionists hadn't grasped that the genie of nationalism, once out of the bottle, would serve any master and divide as much as unite, a point Rapport repeatedly illustrates.

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'Lamartine in front of the Hôtel de Ville de Paris' (1848) by Félix Philippoteaux

Romanian peasants seething under Hungarian landlords in Austrian-ruled Transylvania violently resisted incorporation into an independent Hungary. Czechs were horrified that German liberals wanted Bohemia and its German minority as part of a united Germany.

It all began in February with a workers' protest march in Paris that turned violent when students joined in and a few thrown stones were met with an accidental, but fatal, fusillade from guardsmen. Barricades went up. Soldiers abandoned their units and joined the insurrection. In two days Louis-Philippe, the modest, dull "bourgeois king" installed by the revolution of 1830 to replace the intransigent Bourbon Charles X, was abdicating and fleeing with his wife to England under the alias "Mr. and Mrs. Smith." The news from France, as an American diplomat in Vienna put it, "fell like a bomb amid the states and kingdoms of the Continent; and, like reluctant debtors threatened with legal terrors, the various monarchs hastened to pay their subjects the constitutions which they owed them." Token constitutions often weren't enough, and soon the monarchs were sacking ministers (including Metternich) and packing bags.

Germany, still divided into 39 independent states, and Italy, which hadn't been under a single government since the Roman Empire, had the problem of arriving at a formula for national unity as well as constitutional government. The Germans quickly convened a parliament in Frankfurt, which established free speech and other basic rights for a united Germany that couldn't agree to exist, dissolving into boundary and dynasty disputes. (Both the Prussian king and the Austrian emperor refused the offered constitutional crown.)

Some of the bloodiest street fighting in Europe took place in Berlin, and the Habsburgs had to besiege Vienna, killing 2,000 citizens, to take it back. But the Prussian and Austrian monarchies survived through shrewd concessions and tough military tactics and proceeded to make short work of the remaining liberal movements. While Prussian troops dismantled the Frankfurt parliament and chased off Carl Schurz, the future Republican senator, and hundreds of thousands of his freedom-seeking compatriots to America, the Austrians shelled Venice, briefly a free republic again (luckily they didn't do much damage) and dispersed Garibaldi's volunteers in central Italy. In Hungary, where the largest battles took place, Kossuth's government was eventually crushed by Russian as well as Austrian troops. Meanwhile, back in France, the new Second Republic, weakened by a "red summer" of socialist agitation and working-class rioting, fell into the hands of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, Napoleon's nephew who, after being elected president, replaced it with the pompous Second Empire.

Rapport's account, though sympathetic with the revolutionaries, is shaded with ambiguities. He points out that the old regimes, for all their repressive faults, weren't nearly as bad as modern totalitarian regimes. They had honest bureaucracies and more respect for traditional Central European crazy-quilt social and ethnic complexity than the liberal nationalists who sought to replace them ("the liberals generally preferred to deny to other peoples the very rights and freedoms they claimed for themselves," he comments). The monarchies quickly abolished the remnants of serfdom in their realms

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during the earliest revolutionary unrest. That's why peasants and ethnic minorities sometimes rallied to their side, as did, a little later, portions of the middle class suddenly haunted by Marx's "specter of communism." Liberalism found itself entangled with a nationalism that had antiliberal implications, and 1848 became just another turn in the European labyrinth from which there was no easy way out. ♦

B&A

The Yenta

Barbara Walters asks the questions celebrities want to answer. **BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN**

Sarah Palin, Trig Palin, Barbara Walters, November 16, 2009

DONNA SVENNEVIK / ABC VIA GETTY IMAGES

Where else would Sarah Palin, or for that matter any other politician, entertainer, or criminal copping a plea in public go for the ultimate publicity fix?

She thinks of herself as a journalist, and, true enough, she has worked for the news divisions of some of the major television networks in the United States. She has interviewed 12—perhaps by now it is 13—American presidents and endless numbers of leaders of foreign countries. For a time she worked as a television news anchor—a job held by Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, John Chancellor, men who may be said to specialize in high seriousness—and was the first woman to do so. Her connections, her credentials, her bona fides, her impressively high television ratings, all are there, perfectly in order. Why, then, in spite of all this, and after a long and immensely successful career, money, and accolades flowing in, does she nonetheless seem like nothing so much as a yenta, a good Yiddish word meaning female blabbermouth and busybody?

She, of course, is Barbara Walters.

Barbara Walters was the daughter of Lou Walters, a nightclub impresario famous in his heyday, the 1930s through the '40s, for founding and running the nightclubs called the Latin Quarter. Lou Walters was a high roller, and like most such men, his fortunes, roller coaster-like, went up and down. The ride was not always easy on his womenfolk, Barbara's mother, her three-years-older retarded sister Jackie, and Barbara herself. Guilt and insecurity are the leitmotifs of the memoir Barbara published called *Audition*, a title meant to suggest that she is perpetually in the tenuous condition of trying out for the part. Barbara, as she recounts, was always worried about not doing enough for her family, especially her sister, and was no less worried about being knocked down from the greasy pole of her profession up which she so persistently and aggressively climbed.

Troubled, to put it gently, was Barbara's childhood: many moves owing to her father's rocky business, not seeing enough of her father who worked late hours, feeling the frightening reverberations from the tensions in her parents' marriage, having to drag along her retarded sister, of whom she was half-ashamed and fully guilty for the shame she felt. Fearful of rejection, she didn't run with the first circle of girls in school, but the second. Later she wanted to go to Wellesley—where she was put on the waiting list—but wound up at Sarah Lawrence, another second-circle place.

Yet Sarah Lawrence, in the late 1940s and early '50s, turned out to be the right school for Barbara. Progressive in its aims, it was more than progressive, it was wonderfully avant-coocoo in its methods. In those days Barbara wanted to be an actress, so she majored in something called Theater. Her classes, as she describes them, sound very soft—spongy, really. The one science course she took was The Psychology of Art. She wrote a term paper on Love. The classes were small: six to no more than a dozen students.

"What we did," she reports, "was talk. And discuss. And talk some more. I learned to ask questions and to listen." Sounds, the whole four years, rather like an extended Barbara Walters Special. "I learned never to be afraid of speaking

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up. Every student's point of view was taken seriously, and no one ever said, 'That's stupid' or 'That's irrelevant.'" Perhaps someone should have. Barbara Walters's career might have turned out very differently.

Of Sarah Lawrence she notes that "none of us [she and her fellow students at the all-female college] needed a psychiatrist because we lived in group therapy every day. There were no secrets among us, no privacy." Which only shows how perfect Sarah Lawrence was for Barbara, for her work would always have something of the aura of the warm glow of the therapeutic, of the bull session with the girls, and her entire career, after all, was devoted to eliminating secrets and, thereby, privacy.

She had had some success acting in college plays, but when she auditioned for parts, some of them set up for her through her father's Broadway connections, she found herself overwhelmed by fear of rejection. Instead she took various jobs in and around public relations. One of them was writing publicity for the local affiliate of NBC-TV, which gave her entrée into television. The spread of television, which wrote the end of her father's career as a nightclub impresario—with the rise of televison people went out at night a great deal less, which killed the nightclub business—was, of course, the beginning of her own much grander one.

Like so many young women of her generation, she married in her twenties—a less-than-passionate marriage, in her account of it, to a man named Bob Katz, with whom she discovered she hadn't much to talk about. (Not a good candidate for a Barbara Walters Special, Mr. Katz.) This was to be the first of her three marriages. She also tells us that she had three miscarriages; and so, during her second marriage to a man named Lee Guber, she adopted a child.

Barbara Walters, 1964

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

Between marriages, Barbara was seen around New York with Roy Cohn, one of the most despised men in the country, owing to his work as a McCarthy axe man in his Communist-hunting campaign. She and Cohn were never romantically entangled; he was, as was later revealed, a homosexual (he died of AIDS in 1986). She says that he used her as a beard to cover his homosexuality, which she wasn't aware of at the time. He proposed marriage to her more than once; and at one point, when he had bought a townhouse on the East Side of New York in which he promised to install her sister and her now-down-on-their-luck parents, she claims she was tempted. And oh yes—he, Roy Cohn, she also tells us, had a number of facelifts.

Throughout her memoir Barbara provides lots of such gossipy tidbits. She reports that Maureen O'Sullivan was "on a steady diet of prescription pills," which made her brief time on *The Today Show* less than successful. A figure around Washington named Joan Braden used the lure of sex to secure interviews and scoops as a journalist: She was, Barbara tells us, Bobby McNamara's "so-called traveling campanion, after his wife's death" and supposedly "had a fling with Robert Kennedy." A colleague named Pat Fontaine had a drinking problem. The actor George Sanders's meanness wasn't just in the roles he played; he was a genuine lout. She drags in the old chestnut about John F. Kennedy bonking Angie Dickinson, informs us of Princess Grace's unhappiness in Monaco, gives us the lowdown on John Wayne's diddling his young female assistant, and oh, so much more. But then she also tells us that she herself had a lengthy love affair with Sen. Edward Brooke. A journalist's work is never done.

Apart from being the subject of thunderous scandal, there are really only three ways to continuing fame in contemporary America: Be president of the United States, a highly promoted movie actor, or appear regularly on television. Barbara Walters has appeared regularly on television perhaps more than anyone now alive, which is why she is also among the most famous of living Americans. She achieved celebrity by interviewing celebrity. She was famous enough to be mocked on *Saturday Night Live* by Gilda Radner as Baba Wawa. Celebrity, carefully orchestrated—and Barbara Walters is a Toscanini of her own celebrity—builds on itself. Soon she became the first female anchor, sharing the job with Harry Reasoner, though her salary, to his great chagrin, was larger than his.

Such was Barbara's fame that heads of state, the largest movie stars, people caught up in serious crimes, wished to be interviewed by her. She refers to landing a big interview as a "get," but she was herself a big "get" on her own.

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When in power, Richard Nixon helped set up interviews for her. He had his motives, she hers.

"We used each other," she writes, "and that's the way it has worked out with so many guests I've talked to over the years. People come on TV because they want the exposure and a forum to advance whatever it is they want to advance. And I want something, too—the interview." One dirty hand washes the other, though neither really comes quite clean.

In television, high ratings are of an importance equal to oxygen for human life: Without either, death quickly follows. High ratings were never Barbara's problem; she understood how to get them. In 1974, *Newsweek* put her on its cover, claiming that her interview questions are "dumdum bullets swaddled in angora." Dumb-dumb might have been a little more like it: No one listens to Barbara Walters to learn about the delicate balance of power in Europe, the fate of the economy, or the rise of Islamofascism. They watch her in the hope that she will ask the not-necessarily-outrageous, but the pointedly vulgar, question. And she does not let her viewers down. She asks Fidel Castro if he is secretly married, Prince Philip if his wife Queen Elizabeth would soon be likely to leave the throne so that her son could become king, queries Mrs. George H.W. Bush on her depression, asks Boris Yeltsin if he drinks too much, Vladimir Putin if he has ever killed anyone, Moammar Qaddafi if he is insane, and Martha Stewart "why do so many people hate you?"

She asks Hillary Clinton, after her husband's intern hanky-panky is revealed, "How could you stay in this marriage?" Then she turns the dial a strong notch further and asks: "What if he does it again?" She reports that "I knew it would be hard for her to answer, but I had to ask."

"I had to ask . . ." is a not uncommon formulation of hers. She regrets never having interviewed a pope. If a pope agreed to an interview with Barbara, before it was over she would doubtless get around to asking, "Holy Father, have you no regrets about never having had children?" Camilla Parker Bowles refused to do an interview with Barbara, who no doubt would have asked what's it like to have the Prince of Wales tell you that he wishes he were a tampon inside you? She would, you see, have had to have asked.

Somewhere, not very deep down, Barbara Walters knows that this vulgar streak, asking the low questions that are on the mass mind, is her bread and caviar. She also knows not to step out of her intellectual league, which isn't, let us note lightly and move on, the majors. An interview with Elizabeth Taylor is going to top one with any world leader any day. How does Barbara know? Simple enough; the ratings tell her so. All very well to interview Henry Kissinger (a friend, it turns out, but then very few famous people aren't her friends); but Maria Callas on being deserted by Aristotle Onassis for Jackie (soon to be O) Kennedy rings the ratings gong more resoundingly. Late in her memoir she complains, rather sniffily, that "since the Britney Spearses of the world and sensational crime stories became the big ratings draws, international political leaders . . . have come to be considered dull fare."

Barbara also has a nice taste for vengeance. Two anchors who never cottoned to her, Frank McGee at NBC, and Harry Reasoner at ABC, thinking her insufficiently intelligent and thus lowering the tone of their profession, get her stilleto through belated (posthumous, actually) gossip. She reports that McGee, thought to be a happily married man, toward the end of his life "plunged into a flagrant love affair with a young black production assistant named Mamye, and had left his wife to live with her," adding that she was not "particularly pretty." Reasoner is hung out to dry for his pettiness and backbiting. In her memoir, Barbara front-bites him.

Although some may have missed it, Barbara Walters has all along been living out a secret drama; in it she is a feminist pioneer, who breaks down all the masculine barriers and, at great personal cost, makes the way safe for Diane Sawyer, Katie Couric, and all the other women in television. Why, after all, in a line of work specializing in high pretension, should only men be allowed to score big money as empty trenchcoats?

Barbara claims no one knows her politics, that when she is interviewing famous murderers, thugs, or thieves she holds back judgment, at least during the interview. She will, though, let us know that she feels deeply, very deeply. Of the parents of Ronald Goldman, the young man killed with O.J. Simpson's ex-wife, she tells us that she "ached for them."

Gene Shalit, Barbara Walters, Frank McGee, 1973

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She goes in for what in the business isn't (but ought to be) called The Weepies: Interviewing the families of the victims of 9/11, she lets us know how wrenching it was for her. Repeatedly she reports that she has stayed in touch with men and women she has interviewed, to make sure we all know that she doesn't merely use these people as another "get," useful to score yet another ratings hit. She's very human, she wants us to know, and not in the least corrupted by the somewhat scurrilous job which has provided her such a good ride through life.

Some things Barbara will not do. The thought of her interviewing O.J. Simpson and helping him make money on a book sickens her. She finds Paris Hilton's family's request for money for an interview with their daughter "shoddy." Complicated negotiations were conducted over money for Barbara to interview Monica Lewinsky. "Of course I wanted to do the interview," she reports, "but I was not so ambitious that I didn't have a conscience." As part of her enticement pitch, she tells Monica, "I can give you the forum and the opportunity to present yourself with the greatest dignity." Monica goes for it, and the interview turns out to be "the most watched Special in television history" and "the biggest 'get' of my career." Monica Lewinsky's dignity, never really up for redemption, was not a keynote of the interview.

In the spirit of the times, Barbara gossips about herself. Well, not really about herself, but about members of her family. She talks about the complications of her parents' marriage, about the difficulties of her retarded sister, and finally, most lengthily, about her only (and adopted) daughter Jackie. (The perfect daughter for Barbara, a mischievous mind might say, would have been Monica Lewinsky, but ours is a world of sadly imperfect justice.) Raising Jackie is all sweetness and light, till one day the kid turns up missing lots of classes at the Dalton School, doing drugs, and bonking bad boys. At one point, she runs to ground, as they say in English detective novels about people who go into hiding.

But it is a story with a happy ending: The child is eventually found, detoxed, deprogrammed, and is now back in the game running a "small residential outdoor therapy program" in Maine for wayward girls. Barbara "supported her in every possible way . . . and our relationship became closer and closer."

Why keep the whole thing quiet? Why suppress an inspirational story? Why observe the thinnest desire for privacy? She pitched the story of her and her daughter's saga to NBC's *Dateline*, who bought it. As the punchline about the 84-year-old Jewish furrier who confesses to a priest about impregnating his 23-year-old secretary goes: She, Barbara, told NBC—she told everybody!

Hollywood Walk of Fame, 2007

Her last big shot has been a daytime program called *The View*, in which four or five women not notable for their reticence nor concerned about their dignity talk about the "personal aspects of our lives." ABC, Barbara allows, would only go with the idea for the show if she agreed to appear regularly on it; modesty has its limits. On *The View*, guests of great celebrity, yearning to keep the flame of their fame alive, come on and are invited to do as the regular members do.

"Just plop yourself down on our couch," Barbara writes, "and discuss your film and your sex life." Fun! And another ratings winner for Barbara.

Pretty amazing, all of it. Why has this woman, who is relatively charmless, unless one counts cozening as charming, with lots of energy, boundless ambition but no obvious talent to accompany either—why has Barbara Walters become, with the possible exception of Oprah Winfrey, the most famous woman in America? From writing publicity releases to doing women's bits on morning television to becoming a correspondent-at-large to being the first female news (co-) anchor to running ratings-busting special interviews to being cohost of a television magazine show called *20/20* to being the central figure on a national coffeeklatch, she has gone, as the Victorians used to say—and no one, surely, could be less Victorian than Barbara—from strength to strength.

Now in her seventies, she admits to being a little tired of the game: "Celebrities with problems were becoming less appealing to me," she notes, and the competition for "gets" becoming tougher all the time with Diane Sawyer and Oprah now out on the hunt. But give Barbara her due: Week after week, year after year, she has created gossip through the simple agency of asking the most tasteless questions of famous people, who were foolish and tasteless enough to answer her.

Quite a feat. Not just anyone could have brought it off. Yet to her it all seems to have come so naturally. ♦

NEWSCOM

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B&A

Plus-Size Pathology

Just when things couldn't get worse, they do.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Precious is a waking nightmare of a movie, a well-wrought tale of monstrousness so extreme that watching it is like watching a car wreck as it happens—you can't look away even though you know you should because (a) there is nothing of value in the act of witnessing and (b) it says something disturbing about you that you can't help but want to see the worst as the worst is unfolding.

Precious
Directed by Lee Daniels

Precious is being sold as an affirmation-of-the-human-spirit story, with Oprah Winfrey leading the way as the movie's "presenter." Certainly, the movie's nominally positive message about supposedly overcoming adversity is the reason it has become a box-office sensation. This is the result of an implicit deal between the audience and the filmmakers. By turning around and pretending it's something it really isn't, the makers of *Precious* are offering their audience the thrill of soft-core torture porn with a culturally palatable gloss.

The title character is Claireece Jones, an illiterate 16-year-old girl living in Harlem in 1987. She is grotesquely obese and nearly mute; when she speaks, she barely seems to have the energy to open her mouth, and her eyelids are so heavy with despair they appear mostly closed. Her life is one unimaginably terrible thing after another. She is beaten daily by her mother Mary, who also is determined to stuff her full of food to make her as fat as possible.

Mary hates Precious because she believes Precious stole her man. As the movie begins, Precious is pregnant for the second time. In both cases, the father is her own father, who began abusing her at the age of three. The first pregnancy led to the birth of a Down syndrome child her cruel mother—who kicked her in the head while she gave birth on the kitchen floor—insists on calling her "an animal" and has shunted off on Precious's weak-willed grandmother.

Gabourey Sidibe, who has never acted before, gives one of those astounding one-off performances that pop up in the cinema every decade or so: nonprofessional work so natural and unaffected that it makes all other acting seem fraudulent. It's reminiscent of Harold Russell's indelible work as the disabled World War II veteran in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, the incredible charm of Jocelyne La Garde's turn as a lusty island princess in *Hawaii*, and the Italian workingman Lamberto Maggiorani breaking your heart as the title character in *The Bicycle Thief*.

Precious is so beaten down by life that she barely seems to have a pulse; she stands in sharp contrast to Mary, who bids fair to be the most horrible character in the history of cinema. I'm not exaggerating. Played with unforgettably devilish ferocity by the comedienne Mo'Nique, Mary does not have a single redeeming quality. Cruel, belittling, homicidal, hateful, lazy, stupid, a welfare cheat, obsequious to figures of authority and remorselessly vicious to anyone she can dominate, Mary redefines the screen villain.

The brilliant casting of Sidibe and Mo'Nique is a tribute to the eye of the director, Lee Daniels, who seems to be uniquely inspired in this realm. He convinced the pop singer Mariah Carey to take a small role as an exhausted Jewish social-services worker named Mrs. Weiss, and Carey—heretofore only notorious on celluloid for her ghastly performance in a movie called *Glitter*—is immensely moving and believable.

Precious gets away from her mother as a result of the intervention of Mrs. Weiss and another one of those too-wonderful-to-be-true characters, a drop-dead-gorgeous upper-middle-class black remedial reading teacher (Paula Patton) who also happens to be in a loving same-sex relationship. But don't worry; just when you thought things were looking up for Precious, there is more bad news to come. That bad news, too, we are assured by the movie's profoundly false concluding moments, is just another burden Precious can and will overcome.

The movie to which it has been and will continue to be compared is *Slumdog Millionaire*, last year's stunning Oscar winner, in which a desperately poor Mumbai orphan relives his own horrifying life story and is rewarded with a deliriously happy ending. But the two films could not be more different. *Slumdog Millionaire* is a fable of a kind, a story about providence and predestination, filmed in highly realistic settings but told in a stylized manner. In *Precious*, the title character escapes from her intolerable circumstances by plunging into wild fantasy, but those dreams only serve to make the actual circumstances of her hardscrabble existence all the more acutely depressing.

Moreover, *Slumdog Millionaire* is a universal story about a boy in love who does everything to be reunited with his beloved. The story told in *Precious* (which is adapted from an unreadable novel by a pseudo-poet who goes by the name Sapphire) is so extreme that it does not, thank God, have universal resonance. We aren't all Precious, not even a little bit. In fact, the overwhelming emotion generated by the movie is to make one feel profoundly grateful one isn't anything like her. It's an undeniably powerful thing, this movie Lee Daniels has made, but in the end, *Precious* is little more than a freak show. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"President Obama said Wednesday he was 'very close to a decision' on a troop increase for the war in Afghanistan and would make his case to the American people for his Afghan strategy in the next 'several weeks.'"
—New York Times, *November 18, 2009*

FOR YOU, ONE DOLLAR

, NOVEMBER 25, 2009

PRESIDENT OBAMA 'VERY CLOSE' TO DECIDING FATE OF TURKEY

Decision to Pardon Thanksgiving Bird to Take 'Several Weeks'

By HELENE COOPER

WASHINGTON — At a press conference today, President Barack Obama announced that he is "very close to a decision" on whether or not to pardon a Thanksgiving turkey but that the process will likely take "several weeks" pending further study and consultation with White House advisers, historians, ornithologists, prominent chefs, and David Gergen.

"What is the end game for this game?" asked the president. "Do I spare him? I mean, it's not like he's done anything to harm our nation's interests. On the other hand, I did vow to reverse many of the policies of the previous administration."

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs emphasized that no decision the president makes is ever easy. "Iraq, Afghanistan, cap and trade, the economy, sparing the life of a turkey—this president, unlike his predecessor, takes things very seriously and will not make a rush to judgment." Mr. Gibbs also reminded reporters of the decision by former President George W. Bush to commute the sentence of White House adviser I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby. "We thought commuting Mr. Libby's sentence was the wrong decision. And we weren't even talking about life and death."

President Obama, however, did condemn the practice of decapitating turkeys, saying, "If we start judging the execution policies of Iran and Saudi Arabia, we need to start judging our own practices first." At times the president seemed to empathize with the bird, telling a reporter that "what is important is understanding the mindset of the bird. What makes this turkey run? What ruffles his feathers?"

Advisers to the president, meanwhile, remain at an impasse. While historians have reminded Mr. Obama that the Thanksgiving pardon is a longstanding tradition, Attorney General Eric Holder has suggested the bird be tried

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Mike Matus for Worldwide Image

Thousands of turkeys gathered outside the White House in protest yesterday, chanting, "Who's the real turkey?" and "Gobble, gobble, gobble."

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